TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE OF ONTARIO

# Contact

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## A Tribute to Elizabeth Gryte

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***Elizabeth Gryte 1948-2007***

**We are saddened** that Elizabeth Gryte, Director of Settlement Programs, Ontario Region, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, passed away on Friday evening, June 29, 2007, after a brief battle with cancer.

Elizabeth devoted much of her working life to immigrant issues and we wish to recognize her exceptional dedication and commitment to the settlement of refugees and immigrants. She was instrumental in implementing LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) and TESL Ontario's working relationship with Elizabeth developed during those years when she managed the settlement programs for Ontario and we carried out a number of projects as a Service Providing Organization for CIC. Elizabeth's background included working as an ESL instructor at George Brown College, Red River Community Centre and for the Winnipeg School Division. At TESL Ontario's Annual Conference in 2001 Elizabeth was honoured with a TESL Ontario pin for her contributions to ESL.

Elizabeth was the recipient of the Deputy Minister's Achievement Award and the Award of Excellence, which recognizes exceptional performance and represents one of the highest official distinctions a public servant can receive. While Elizabeth was honoured by this recognition, her real reward came from making a difference in the lives of newcomers to Canada. Her vision and leadership led to a number of new CIC initiatives, including the creation of a settlement website, the computerization of settlement programs and the improvement of educational programs and information centres for newcomers.

TESL Ontario valued Elizabeth's personal integrity and unstinting support for our organization and we will miss her greatly. ◊

# From the Editor

A **perceptive editor** once wrote that two purposes of a good magazine should be to comfort the agitated and agitate the comfortable. In this issue of *Contact* we salute the many contributors who, by sharing their serious thoughts and provocative humour, have helped us to strike such a worthy balance.

We begin with a photo-illustrated retrospective on **Margaret Elliott**'s career as an ESL instructor. What is perhaps most astonishing is that it didn't begin until she was in her forties, yet it still spanned more than 30 years. This remarkable teacher reflects on the challenges and joys of teaching English not only to newcomers to Canada, but overseas as well. Her retirement has been long delayed, but that has never really been a problem for Margaret. Some new challenge always seems to interpose itself, and she can't resist.

If you have ever been curious about exchange teaching in a foreign country, you can start your fact-finding right here. **Eleanor Cooper** details her year of teaching at Thebarton College in Adelaide, South Australia. Adaptability, she concludes, is the personal quality you'll need most if you decide to dive into a similar offshore adventure.

What should a classroom teacher do when students race to the dictionary to look up every new word they meet? **Milla Vago** offers some practical solutions to this question, coming from both sound research and practical classroom observation.

By the time you read this issue of *Contact*, the hockey season will once again be upon us. To prepare us for the fall semester, **Karen Thomson** reviews a new multi-media resource sure to be a hit in many ESL and liter-

*(Continued on page 3)*

## *Contact* us

*Contact* welcomes articles of general interest to association members, including announcements, reports, articles, calls for papers and news items.

Contributors should include their full name, title and affiliation. Text should be e-mailed to: teslontario@telus.net

or mailed on CD to:

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**27 Carlton Street, Suite 405,**
**Toronto, Ontario, M5B 1L2**

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# From the Editor

*(Continued from page 2)*

acy classrooms. It's a CD-ROM based on the famous story by Quebec writer Roch Carrier called "The Hockey Sweater". Karen's review gives this innovative learning material a definite thumbs up!

In her memoir, **Kai Xing** brings a fresh perspective to ESL learning as she negotiates the pitfalls, loopholes and contradictions of standard English. Somehow Kai emerged from the learning process (almost) unscathed by relying on the rich resources of her third language, Chinglish. And she just can't seem to get rid of it, no matter how hard she tries. But then, should she? You be the judge.

On the research front, **Khaled Barkaoui** summarizes factors that affect L2 learners' development and performance in writing. He calls upon teachers in L2 writing classrooms to consider individual differences among learners, their prior learning experiences with L2 writing and the demands of different writing tasks as they plan lessons, devise assessment instruments, evaluate the performance of L2 writers and give feedback.

Advancing a theme that is rapidly acquiring more prominence in the national consciousness, at the interface of education, culture, and identity, **Robert Courchêne** explores the issue of teaching religion in our schools. What can we learn from the experience of other western countries with large immigrant populations that will help us to forge a coherent approach to the issue here in Canada?

He concludes by offering a set of ten proposals as part of the discussion.

The study of vocabulary — a significant area in applied linguistics and language teaching — has created a need for new approaches in assessment. **Maria Claudia Petrescu** reviews **John Read**'s book, *Assessing Vocabulary*, a noteworthy contribution to the field. Professor Read expands the traditional concept of a vocabulary test to cover a broadened range of practical procedures for assessing the vocabulary knowledge of L2 learners.

Finally, this issue of *Contact* comes tinged with sadness at the loss of a much-loved and respected leader in our field, **Elizabeth Gryte**. Elizabeth was the Director of Settlement Programs for the Ontario Region of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. She died of cancer in late June. Elizabeth's contribution to the lives of thousands of newcomers to Canada and to the ESL profession will be long remembered.

As ever, a great debt of gratitude is owed to **Laura Stoutenburg** and **Bob Courchêne** for their insight and ideas in helping to make *Contact* a lively and readable publication.

We hope that this issue gives you not only food for thought but also nourishment for the soul. A happy summer to all. ◊

*Clayton Graves*

Editor

***"Two purposes of a good magazine should be to comfort the agitated and agitate the comfortable."***

# My TESL Career

*By Margaret Elliott*

***"...I decided that I could not cope with the frustrations that seemed to be an inescapable part of the job. "***

**In 1971 I was struggling** to put together my life after the sudden death of my husband at the age of fifty-one. One day my sister said to me, "What are you going to do to start living again?" I answered glumly, " I don't know!"

"Well," she said, "you'd better go to university."

I acted on her advice, and September of that year found me enrolled as an undergraduate at Carleton University in Ottawa. I chose to major in anthropology, since this was a course just on the point of being offered in the Ontario high school curriculum.

I felt I might have a more promising chance of success in teaching a course that the younger students were being faced with for the first time. I was very conscious, you see, of my forty-six years.

In my second year at Carleton, a linguistics course was one of the required subjects. I found this interesting and soon changed to a double major — anthropology and linguistics. This broader academic commitment had a number of positive features, not the least of which was that it could potentially open up another career choice — language teaching.

Teaching children with learning disabilities was yet another possible area to pursue. Indeed, I had an opportunity to explore this route as a volunteer in a class of autistic children for a short time. While I had excellent guidance and support in this undertaking, I decided that I could not cope with the frustrations that seemed to be an inescapable part of the job.

It was at that point that I decided to focus on becoming qualified to teach English as a Second Language. Therefore, after I completed my undergraduate degree, I enrolled in a new course to earn a Certificate in TESL. It was the first time this elective had been offered at Carleton.

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# My TESL Career

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During this period, too, I accepted a request from the Continuing Education Department of the Ottawa School Board to take over an ESL class for new Canadians. In tackling this job, however, I not only had to find volunteers to work with me as I taught the students but also get a supervisor to care for their preschool children. Fortunately for me (since I had had no prior teaching experience at this point) there was not too wide a range of English-speaking abilities in the class, so I managed with only a little difficulty to set up the program and get it going.

About the time I completed my TESL Certificate course, a group of Venezuelan university students came to study ESL at Carleton. I was one of the teachers hired to work in this project, and believe me I have mixed memories of my first full-time ESL teaching job.

I was assigned to the group with the lowest level of English language skills. At that time I had not learned the advantages of dividing a class into small groups for instruction, and consequently I stood at the front of the class while the students had to wait their turn to speak.

As the weeks went by they became more and more dissatisfied with my instructional approach and complained to the director. As a result, my teaching duties were taken from me and I spent the remaining weeks of my contract doing 'research' work for the other teachers. It was a sad jolt, but one that taught me a lot.

There were some changes in my personal life around this time, and I moved away from Ottawa. However, I was still determined to continue on this career path that had had such an inauspicious beginning. I decided to strengthen my academic credentials once again and entered a Master's degree program in English at Michigan State University, in East Lansing, Michigan, with a focus on TESOL.

In the spring of 1981, just a few months before the end of my master's program, I attended a conference of the American TESOL Association in Ann Arbor, Michigan. My intention was to find a teaching position overseas. I entered the large room at the conference venue, surveyed the row of application desks arranged along the four walls, and strode firmly toward the one for China.

At that time, China was just entering a new period of development. Unfortunately, they were looking for ESL instructors with teaching experience who would not only be able to set up training centres but also provide a curriculum and train Chinese teachers to teach their own students. It was a tall order and I didn't seem to fit the bill.

I was disappointed, of course, but not discouraged, so I walked past a few more tables and stopped at the one for South Korea. They were looking for ESL teachers to work in a new program under the umbrella of Sogang University in Seoul, one of the top five higher education centres in the country.

At the desk, in addition to the

(Continued on page 6)

***"...the most valuable support for us was a filing system where teachers were asked to contribute copies of their lesson plans."***

# My TESL Career

*The Han Nam University class take me on a picnic in 1983.*

***"...the most valuable support for us was a filing system where teachers were asked to contribute copies of their lesson plans."***

*(Continued from page 5)*

Korean director who held a position in the university's Department of English, there were two experienced American ESL teachers whose job was to oversee the work of the newly hired teachers. This time I was hired, and asked to report for work in Seoul on the first of October. That gave me just enough time to complete my Master's program in mid-June and return home to Canada to set my affairs in order before setting off for the new adventure.

I must say that the working conditions at Sogang were excellent. There were about eight teachers in this new program, mostly American, and there was one other Canadian teacher and one from India. There was also an adequate library of teaching materials to use for reference.

To my mind, however, the most valuable support for us was a filing system where teachers were asked to contribute copies of their lesson plans. I have since met teachers who don't like this feature of some foreign teaching assignments, but I found that it in no way diminished my own creativity, only strengthened it.

In addition to its own English programs, the Sogang Institute also had contracts with a variety of Korean business firms, including Kia, Hyundai, and the Bank of Korea. Our job was to prepare their employees to work abroad in English-speaking environments. It was in this program that I developed my own version of the

*(Continued on page 7)*

# My TESL Career

*(Continued from page 6)*

'small group' approach. I quickly discovered that it maximized student participation and reduced the anxiety that resulted from one student having to address the entire class.

Of course, after the small groups had responded to their assignment, there was a 'sharing the result' period, when each group leader reported on and discussed their group's opinions. However nerve-wracking this reporting role might become, it never matched the level of stress that accompanied one student having to answer a question from the teacher in front of all his or her peers.

As well as teaching the men and women sent by their companies, at Sogang we sometimes gave classes for the 'housewives', many of whom were also graduates of the university. We discovered that they had heard of our ESL program through the university's information grapevine.

In addition, each teacher in our group had one or two classes of regular students at the university who needed to improve their English speaking skills. These classes were larger than the ones for company trainees; however, the small group approach that I had used successfully before worked equally well with these students.

The smaller learning groups were also a welcome change for them after their English classes in middle and high school. Through those years, their teachers would give English instruction in Korean about 70 per cent of the time. The classes were so large, often numbering forty or fifty, that a student would quite often only have the opportunity to speak in English once or twice a week.

After four years at Sogang Institute, I decided I needed a change.

To be clear, the teaching assignment continued to offer an interesting challenge; however, a term lasted about fourteen weeks, with a break of only three weeks before a new one began. This did not give me enough time to travel to my home near Ottawa and attend to my responsibilities there. Something had to give.

About this time, a colleague and I presented two weekend workshops for Korean teachers of English. In this group was the director of a language institute in another city, Taejon, who invited me to join his staff.

When I explained that the institute's term schedule was difficult for me, he arranged an interview for me with the director of the Language and Literature Department at Hannam University, to which his institute was attached. This all worked out favourably, and in the fall of 1985 I happily settled in at Hannam. As well as the Korean colleagues, there were several American ESL teachers on the faculty.

Shortly after I arrived at Hannam I became aware of a disruptive situation in university classrooms caused to some degree by the compulsory three years of military training for young Korean males. They often chose to do this national service after completing their first year of university studies. Their return to the university

*(Continued on page 8)*

***"...we sometimes gave classes for the 'housewives', many of whom were also graduates of the university."***

# My TESL Career

We all, army guys, had a very good remembrance with you.
Come to realize the end of meeting, we can feel certain feeling,
but we can't say what is that. Because that is invisible thing.
We conclude, "Wow! that is our love to mrs. Elliot." Yes. we appreciate
Your teaching to us through the army class. Thank you very much. 90.12.14.

***My class of 'Army guys' at Han Nam University 1990.***

***"...I became aware of a disruptive situation in university classrooms caused to some degree by the compulsory three years of military training for young Korean males."***

*(Continued from page 7)*

for their second year of study, however, required some readjustment because many, if not most, of their classmates were three years younger.

There was an additional factor contributing to the disruption, however, related to the structure of the Korean language. Young people were required to use a different verb structure to address their elders. Their culture required the younger classmates to use this formal verb structure when addressing the older students.

A similar example can be found in our own mix of language and culture - in the past more than at the present - when younger people were expected to call their seniors by the title of 'Mr.' or 'Mrs.'

The result of this cultural and

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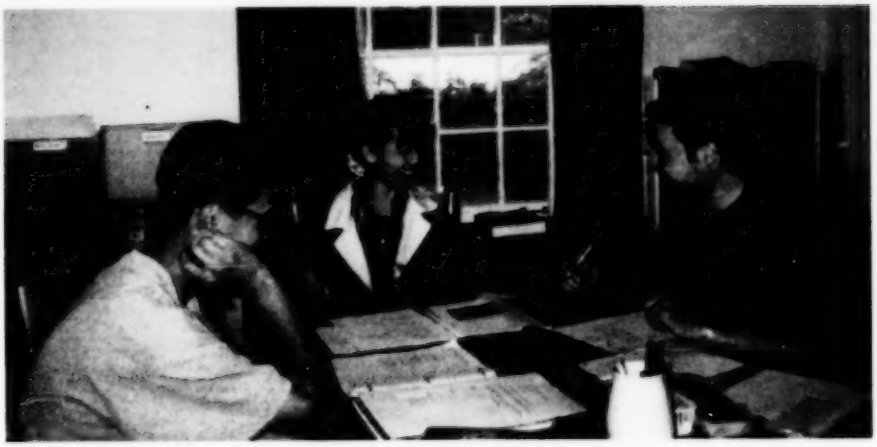
# My TESL Career



***The Deep River Experiential English Program in 1996***

*(Continued from page 8)*

linguistic peculiarity branded the returned men as a separate group and exacerbated the normal readjustment difficulties they encountered in their courses. I was aware of this tension, but did not realize the degree of its seriousness until a small group of these young men came to talk to me in my office. I could do nothing to alter the rules of their culture, of course, but I could improve their confidence by helping them to improve their English skills.

To alleviate the tense situation, I decided to establish an early morning class for 'my army guys' several times a week, providing extra time for them to practice their English. Happily, the solution seemed to work.

While I was at Hannam, I worked with several colleagues to set up the Korean Association of Teachers of English (KATE) along the lines of TESL Ontario and American TESOL. We soon had regular meetings, with Korean and visiting teachers coming from different cities in the area. There was also an English teachers' association that served Seoul, AETK, but it was not until September of 1992 that AETK and KATE amalgamated to form KOTESOL, which continues to flourish throughout South Korea.

In 1991 I reached the age of sixty-five and lost my position as a faculty member. In a bit of a quandary, I continued for another year as an instructor, buying myself some time to deal with the question, " What am I going to do next?" As it happens, my return to Canada provided the answer.

Acting on a suggestion from an ESL teacher in the Deep River school system, I decided to set up an ESL school for international students, with classes in my home. We called it the Experiential English Program or EEP. This would run during the holidays, and we would provide accommodation with host families.

*(Continued on page 10)*

***"Young people were required to use a different verb structure to address their elders."***

# My TESL Career

***Students at the Experiential English Program were real 'city kids', so canoeing on one of Canada's pristine lakes was a new adventure.***

*(Continued from page 9)*

All the necessary work to get the program running certainly kept me from being bored. In July of 1993 the first session opened. I had hired several part- time assistants for secretarial work, teaching, and recreation. My house was large enough to accommodate a two- or three-level program.

***"It soon became apparent that I desperately needed an assistant..."***

Twice, a group of a dozen younger Korean students came with a Korean teacher. They were too young to stay with host families, but we were able to accommodate them in a nearby tourist camp area in cottages, and a dining room served as our classroom.

A teacher from the EEP program worked with the accompanying Korean teacher and we arranged for several local high school students to serve as volunteers.

The last year EEP operated was 1999. About that time, the economic malaise that had been festering in many Asian countries tumbled into a severe recession. Since it was from those areas that many of our students came, recruitment of students was severely affected and made our task next to impossible. So ended another chapter of my story.

You would be mistaken if you think that this meant the end of my teaching career, however. In 1997, on Easter Monday, I received a telephone call from the principal of our local high school. She told me that a refugee family of seven had just arrived from Rwanda and needed ESL instruction immediately to help them get established in Canada.

I was able to start the class two days later. I had all the materials on file that I needed for evaluation and to set up a program. Not surprisingly, as soon as word of this new class spread, the numbers grew. It was sponsored by the Continuing Education Department of the Renfrew County Board of Education.

It soon became apparent that I desperately needed an assistant because I was preparing at the same time for the summer session of my own school which would start in a couple of months. So for the next three years I

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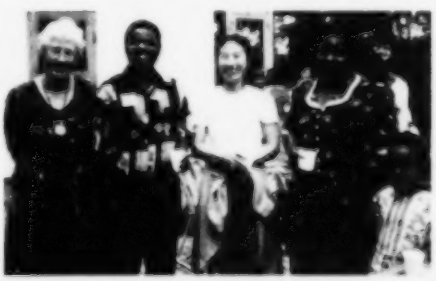


***The Rwandan couple with their youngest child were welcomed into the program.***

# My TESL Career

*(Continued from page 10)*

continued to split the time with my colleague until I retired at the end of 2000, because of impending back surgery.

However, this retirement did not last very long either. The reason was that there are a quite a number of non-native English-speaking scientists and engineers who are employed locally with Atomic Energy of Canada. On several occasions, I was asked to help them improve their English, particularly their pronunciation. Sometimes small classes would be held at my home, and sometimes classes would be set up at their work place.

In the past few years I have also been engaged as a 'volunteer tutor' for several students who were enrolled in the Independent Learning Centre's Distance Education ESL Program. That gave me the welcome contact with students that I enjoyed but without having to prepare lessons. I have had no new students for six months now, so perhaps I really have finally retired!

I have described the various situations where I have taught — or helped to organize — classes in English as a second language during the past thirty years. The 'what' and 'how' I have taught over the years remains to be examined.

The only teaching situation in my career where there was a prescribed textbook was for university ESL courses. Even then I was able to use the textbook as a backup and to mainly use my own materials.

For small class non-credit teaching, which I did primarily, I prepared a 'handout' for each student, with the class time divided into sections, as I will explain.

***Students can also teach classmates. Learning goes better with a touch of humour. No extra charge for the haircut!***

As we all know, the four main elements of language learning are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Grammar is an important function of each of these. Pronunciation and rhythm can make the difference in whether a student's speaking is understood, and thus 'acceptable', or not.

For some of my students, writing was not an important skill. Speaking and listening could be combined as conversation. Any exercise that would provide opportunity for conversation would also pinpoint examples of pronunciation and rhythm that were interfering with the exchange of ideas.

However, one of the lessons about effective teaching that I learned early on is that it is often more effec-

*(Continued on page 12)*

***"...it is often more effective to deal with suggestions for improving pronunciation in a subsequent lesson than to intimidate a student by confronting him immediately."***

# My TESL Career

***Every graduate needs a diploma***

*(Continued from page 11)*

tive to deal with suggestions for improving pronunciation in a subsequent lesson than to intimidate a student by confronting him immediately. I have found that the same approach works for teaching grammar. That is, note the important errors as you go, and work to correct them later without interrupting the activity.

My central goal was to help students develop their language ability to be able to think in English. I developed a wide variety of activities using suitable newspaper articles and taped material from radio and television. Good material can also be found in books, especially for children and teenagers, if the teaching schedule allows you to continue a topic over a number of classes.

One of the activities that I found most popular with the students was debating, because of the element of competitiveness, I suppose. And of course it is an excellent way to promote small group discussion.

Computers now play an important role in language teaching and learning. The tedious task of preparing 'fill in the missing word' exercises, for example, can be done much more quickly this way. For students, there is also an incredible amount of material available through the internet.

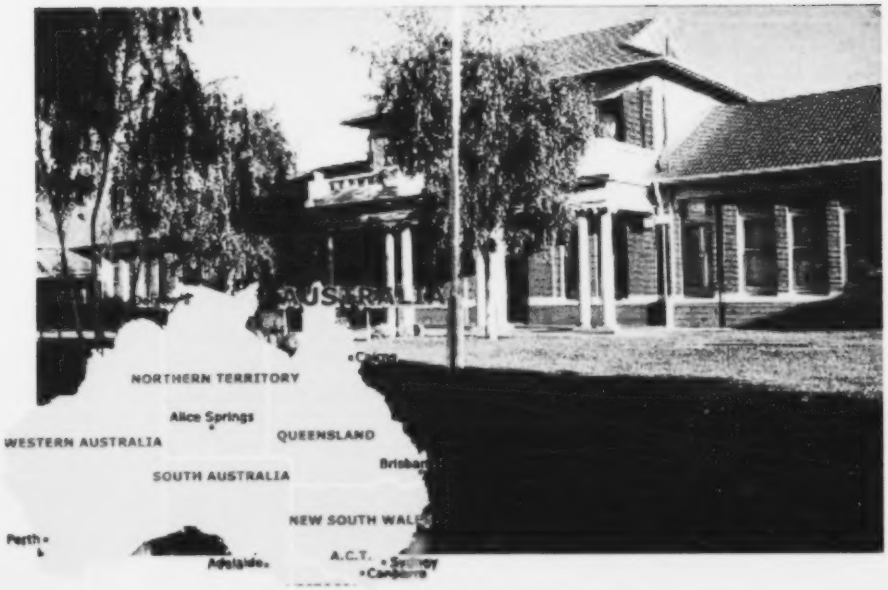
However, it is of the greatest importance to remember that a student usually works in isolation at a computer, where the advantages of communicative activities are lost. Every technology seems to have its pros and cons.

As I leaf through my masses of lesson materials, memories come back: the faces of students reappear and the joys and the heartbreaks reassert themselves in what came to be a surprisingly fulfilling life's work for me. Even as I sit before the keyboard now, I suddenly feel: "Wouldn't it be great to have to prepare a class for tomorrow?" ◊

***"...it is of the greatest importance to remember that a student usually works in isolation at a computer..."***

# My ESL Exchange in Australia

*by Eleanor Cooper,*
*Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute, Toronto*




***Thebarton Senior College, Torrensville, South Australia***

**In 2005 I spent a year** in Adelaide, South Australia on a teacher exchange arranged by the Canadian Education Exchange Foundation. I taught ESL at a state school called Thebarton Senior College in Torrensville, just four kilometres from Adelaide, in an adult re-entry program that prepares students for college and university as well as for apprenticeship programs.

At Thebarton there was also a large ESL population, mostly recent refugees from Sudan, Liberia and Afghanistan. That is the section of the college which became my home for the academic year.

My students ranged in age from 16 to 70 years, and included a cohort of literacy-level learners, some of whom had been in Australia for 15 or more years, but whose reading and writing skills were not very high, even in their first language.

As I reflect on my exchange year, memories come flooding back, but it's the overwhelmingly positive nature of the adventure that remains most clearly in my mind. I should explain that one of my reasons for applying for a teacher exchange to Australia was that I have two daughters living there, and their nearness was a great source of comfort and happiness. I also found that celebrating Christmas in 30-degree temperatures was no problem at all!

This is not to say that there weren't challenges to be met, because there were. Any successful educational exchange implies accommodation, especially for the newly-arrived teacher.

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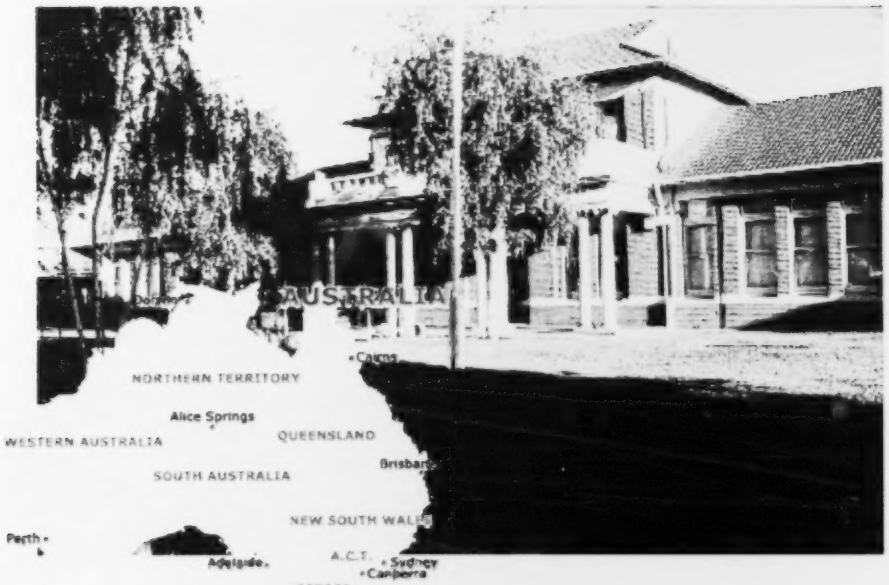
***"As I reflect on my exchange year, memories come flooding back..."***

# My ESL Exchange in Australia

*by Eleanor Cooper,*
*Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute, Toronto*

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*(Continued on page 14)*

***"As I reflect on my exchange year, memories come flooding back..."***

# My ESL Exchange in Australia

*Eleanor Cooper with ESL class*

***"As a visiting teacher, of course, I had no voice or power to change things."***

*(Continued from page 13)*

You have to be prepared for the inevitability of adjustments to new teaching and learning resources, a quite different philosophical approach and different administrative procedures. So the exchange teacher adventure will also call upon personal resources, not the least of which is adaptability - to a new country, new climate, and new living arrangements.

Anyone who is considering an international exchange should also know that you will be exchanging living quarters with the other teacher. We didn't exchange cars, however; in Adelaide I took the bus to school every day, but that was actually quite pleasant. There was also a nice, cool pub just around the corner from my small house, so that helped, too. To top it all off, at the end of my exchange year I enjoyed a trip to Vietnam and Cambodia.

I soon noticed some clear differences in approach between the South Australian system from what I was used to here in Ontario. As a visiting teacher, of course, I had no voice or power to change things. Some might see this as a negative, but I tried to view it in a positive light. In fact, overall I would say that it moved me to re-examine my own philosophy and program when I returned to Marc Garneau Collegiate, where I am the curriculum leader of ESL. Upon reflection, I think that I not only acquired a new level of patience and flexibility

*(Continued on page 15)*

# My ESL Exchange in Australia

***The class included refugee students from Sudan, Liberia and Afghanistan***

*(Continued from page 14)*

from the experience but some new ideas and a more positive appreciation of our Canadian approach, especially its openness.

One of the major differences between the South Australia system and ours concerns funding for students. During their first 18 months in the country, students are funded by the federal government and classified under NAP – the New Arrivals Program. This program is richly funded and students stay in the same cohort for all their subjects. The main focus is to provide orientation to Australia and to school; however students also take math, science, computers and options. After the initial 18 months, or if students are ready to integrate, they are then classified as ESL. At that point they have more integration into regular classes for their academic subjects.

Another major difference revolved around assessment and evaluation of ESL students. Assessment is done using a 14-point scale, based on a functional grammar approach, which looks at grammar, language and genre. To arrive at an assessment, once a term students do a piece of writing that is scaled or graded by a team of teachers. For example, the piece of writing done by the student could be an argument, an opinion or a procedure, depending on the student's language level. In the NAP program, however, students don't get a percentage mark. The report card

*(Continued on page 16)*

***"...NAP students don't get a percentage mark. The report card mainly evaluates their work habits."***

# My ESL Exchange in Australia

(Continued from page 15)

mainly evaluates their work habits.

I am not sure that such a 'one shot' summative approach to assessment, based on only one piece of writing, would find a high level of support amongst teachers and administrators here, where we are continually observing and assessing with a view to functional language outcomes.

At Thebarton College, a given cohort of students remained with each other during the whole term, and while this approach has some advantages, I did observe that within a cohort – say, at the Beginner Level - there was a huge range of language competence; however, the multi-level group remained as such through the whole program. Here in Ontario, in contrast, we tend to define and arrange instructional levels more specifically, and gauge our instructional program in a more differentiated way. Individual learners move to new levels as they are ready.

***"I am not sure that such a 'one shot' summative approach to assessment, based on only one piece of writing, would find a high level of support amongst teachers and administrators here..."***

The curriculum varied considerably because students could exit high school in ESL if their scale assessment was over 11. In year 12, the top level, 50 per cent of their final mark was derived from term work and 50 per cent was summative (based on an examination and a project). I should add that the summative portion was evaluated externally.

Thebarton Senior College is somewhat like an adult education centre here. In fact, in some respects it resembles our own City Adult Learning Centre (CALC) in Toronto. When I visited a regular Australian high school, like my own in East York, I discovered that their program was quite different from that offered at Thebarton.

At my school there was also an International Program similar to our program for visa students, but it was separate from the ESL program, and emphasized orientation to school, state and country in the first semester. The international students took classes in

(Continued on page 17)

**The Canadian Education Exchange Foundation**

The Canadian Education Exchange Foundation (CEEF) is a non-profit foundation which handles both student and educator exchanges. International educational exchanges offer educators and their students an opportunity to broaden their understanding of one another's cultures, customs and languages. Exchanges are rewarding, but there are some factors that teachers need to consider carefully prior to applying to the program. Visit their website for complete information, including destination countries and a detailed application kit: www.ceef.ca

The destination countries at present include Australia, Denmark, Germany, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Switzerland, The Republic of Ireland, The U.K. (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), Colorado, and the Council of International Schools.

Mailing address:

**Canadian Education**
**Exchange Foundation**
**250 Bayview Drive**
**Barrie ON L4N 4Y8**

# My ESL Exchange in Australia

(Continued from page 16)

all their subjects together, but were integrated into the regular program for the second semester. NAP students at the very beginning stages of learning English were sent to another school until their proficiency level was assessed at the intermediate level.

I was impressed with the rich resources and support for immigrants at Thebarton College. For example, for the major language groups the system provided bilingual support staff who could translate and help in class. There was also a wonderful weekly news program, "Behind the News", which covered current issues both in Australia and the world.

We also had ready access to a teachers' website where we could access support materials.

In addition, the resource centre had books and newspapers in many first languages as well as taped books for ESL students. And a system called "Book It" made it possible to request another teacher to help in my literacy class.

The fact that a lot of administrative tasks were handled on the computer rather than through conversation was an eye-opener for me, accustomed as I was to face-to-face discussion with my teaching colleagues. Looked at from another perspective, however, my computer skills were certainly enhanced.

As I recall my year in Australia, I would say that it was the students in that adult literacy class for whom I have the fondest memories. They found a way into my heart, and the memory of that remains with me here in Toronto.

I was very impressed with the teachers at Thebarton. My colleagues were dedicated, caring and highly professional, and a true team approach was definitely a strong feature of their program.

I liked their attitudes about planning, too: we eased into the academic year during a week and a half we spent together to prepare and share ideas and resources before we even met the students.

We also met frequently during the year to discuss curriculum and student concerns, and though we had some differences in philosophy, especially in the areas of evaluation and curriculum, we all shared the same goal - to provide the best programs and encourage students to achieve their potential.

All in all, going on a teacher exchange is a very rewarding professional experience. So rewarding, in fact, that in only one week I am off to China for a month to do the same thing.

I guess that's proof enough that I enjoy the challenge. I'd recommend it to anyone who is looking for a short-term adventure in their teaching career. You never know where it might take you. ◊

***"I was impressed with the rich resources and support for immigrants..."***

# Teaching Contextual Guessing as a Reading Strategy

*by Milla Vago ESL Instructor,*
*Toronto Catholic District School Board*

**Some studies have suggested** that students who use a bilingual dictionary when they read learn more vocabulary than those who read without a dictionary (Luppescu & Day, 1993).

Other research, however, reveals that students who use contextual guessing to acquire new vocabulary significantly outperform those who rely primarily on word form analysis in tests of word knowledge (Cheong-sook, 1999).

So, which strategy is better and more productive? Furthermore, if guessing the meaning from context is useful, can we teach it?

I used to observe that when my students read authentic materials they often wanted to systematically look up every unknown word they met, apparently unaware that there were clues to unlock the meaning of unknown words in the context.

***"...when my students read authentic materials they often wanted to systematically look up every unknown word they met."***

I also noticed that by extracting individual words from their context and jumping immediately to the dictionary, they often lost the thread of meaning of the reading passage as a whole.

Moreover, the tedious 'looking up' activity definitely slowed down their reading rate, appeared to disrupt their processes of comprehension and just seemed to lessen their overall enjoyment of reading.

So it is my contention that alongside other strategies for effective and meaningful reading, we ESL teachers should be encouraging our students to develop and refine their guessing skills, using contextual clues. On the face of it, contextual guessing appears to have several general advantages over dictionary use:

- It helps students to become more independent learners. In their reading, both in class and outside, students naturally meet a huge number of unfamiliar words. The successful application of contextual guessing will enable them to read more extensively on their own without seeking external help, either from the teacher or from the dictionary.
- Training students to use contextual clues when they read should also enhance their ability to interpret the meanings of new words more accurately when they encounter them in different contexts (Swaffar, 1988; R. Ellis, 1995). Therefore, students need to meet new and important words in various natural contexts. (Carrell, 1984).
- Contextual guessing provides students a set of strategies to help them infer context-dependent meanings that are sometimes missing in dictionaries; for example, proper names, connotations and referential meanings.
- On the whole, the contextual guessing strategy helps students to acquire new vocabulary, as noted by researchers such as Gray (1997), Ney (1996) and Richardson (1980).

## When should we teach contextual guessing?

According to Im (1994), the ability to guess accurately depends on the learner's overall language proficiency level. The larger the working vocabulary students already have, the better guessers they will be.

*(Continued on page 19)*

# Teaching Contextual Guessing

*(Continued from page 18)*

Does this imply, then, that contextual guessing should be taught only, or even primarily, to higher-level students? Should we wait until students reach a certain proficiency level, or can we in fact start teaching contextual-guessing strategies to lower-level students?

It has been my experience that contextual guessing strategies (along with other vocabulary acquisition skills) can be successfully taught even to lower level students.

For example, we can encourage lower-level students to use a contextual guessing strategy by demonstrating that clues for meaning are already embedded in or supported by the immediate context – within adjacent phrases, clauses, sentences or paragraphs.

In teaching contextual guessing to low-level students it is also helpful to provide reading materials that include pictures that provide clues to the meaning of the print.

In addition, we can adapt texts so that specific words to be guessed are highlighted and multiple-choice answers provided.

According to some researchers (Nation and Coady, 1988; Seal, 1991), students are often required to guess 60 to 80 per cent of the unknown words in a text even when the ratio of unknown words is low.

And according to Saragi, Nation & Meister, (1978) to be able to acquire new vocabulary, learners must understand about 95 per cent of the words in the text.

## How should we choose texts for practice?

Vacca and Vacca (1989) suggest that teachers should choose texts in which the vocabulary is quite challenging for the students. At the same time, the context must actually contain clues they can use to guess at the meaning of unfamiliar words.

In addition, the students' background knowledge must also be carefully gauged to enhance the potential for the contextual guessing strategy to work. In other words, to enable the process teachers need to search for age-and experience-appropriate materials to match their learners.

Deighton (1970) further specifies several factors that govern whether the use of contextual guessing can be effectively activated with any given text:

1. Students' background knowledge and life experience which determine what the context may disclose to them.

*(Continued on page 20)*

***Examples of highlighting words, multiple choice answers and clues for contextual guessing:***

*The ferocious dogs were barking loudly.*

1. *sleeping*
2. *angry*
3. *lazy*
4. *white*

*We are going shopping. Before we hit the malls, let's stop by the bank machine.*

1. *buy*
2. *destroy*
3. *visit*
4. *forget*

***"Should we wait until students reach a certain proficiency level, or can we in fact start teaching contextual-guessing strategies to lower-level students?"***

# Teaching Contextual Guessing

(Continued from page 19)

2. Unknown words should appear close to the rest of the context that will help to disclose their meaning.
3. There must be some kind of clue in the context to the meaning of an unknown word.

In my experience, some students are actually unaware that there may be clues to the meaning of unknown words in the context and so they are unable to apply any guessing strategies on their own.

So, alongside directly teaching vocabulary and other reading skills, we probably need to demonstrate:

1. How to guess from what you already know as well as from the other words in the context.
2. How to recognize different kinds of formatting features and proper names.
3. How to spot paraphrases and repetitions or redundancies.
4. How to apply background knowledge about the overall topic. Above all we need to encourage our students to take the risk involved in guessing. They have to be shown that the payoff in learning is worth it.

***"...students are actually unaware that there may be clues to the meaning of unknown words in the context..."***

## Is it ever more productive to use a dictionary?

There are both advantages and disadvantages of dictionaries and perhaps we need to point out some of the negative aspects to our students.

Every ESL teacher has met the student who says, "I understand every word, but I don't understand the meaning of the sentence." They need to know why and how this happens.

They also need to understand the limitations inherent in dictionaries. Students need to know, for example, that one word can have several meanings depending on the context.

In my view, ESL teachers should always suggest that students try to guess the meanings of unknown words through context clues first.

However, in reality, we know that teachers can't completely keep students from looking up words in a dictionary.

Summers (1988) claims that dictionary use can play an important role in ESL learning and should therefore not be excluded from our repertoire of instructional strategies.

She points out, for example, that it is not always possible to grasp the meaning of words by means of contextual clues alone. Here, for example, are some situations in which contextual guessing has limited applicability:

- When the ratio of unknown words to known words is too high; this prevents students from grasping the gist (the central idea or essence of something).
- When the interaction of both the context and word form analysis don't provide enough clues to a word's meaning.
- When the exact meaning of the word is required.

## Instructional Strategies

One teaching strategy that many effective ESL teachers use is to ask students to guess first, and then consult a

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# Teaching Contextual Guessing

*(Continued from page 20)*

dictionary to check and confirm their "educated" predictions about the meanings of specially selected and underlined words.

Another strategy is to ask students to first read the text without dictionaries and underline, highlight, or circle all unfamiliar words and expressions. After that, the students are asked to write an approximate meaning or maybe two meanings for each underlined word. Finally, they can confirm their guesses with the help of the dictionary.

With consistent instruction and encouragement on the value of contextual guessing, students soon come to see its value as they improve in their reading rate, their word knowledge, and ultimately their reading enjoyment. ◊

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***"Students soon come to see its value as they improve ... their reading enjoyment."***

*NEW LEARNING MATERIAL:*

# CD-ROM: *The Hockey Sweater*

***FAQs about the CD-ROM version of this Canadian classic story***

***Review by Karen Thomson***

***"What is a CD-ROM?"***

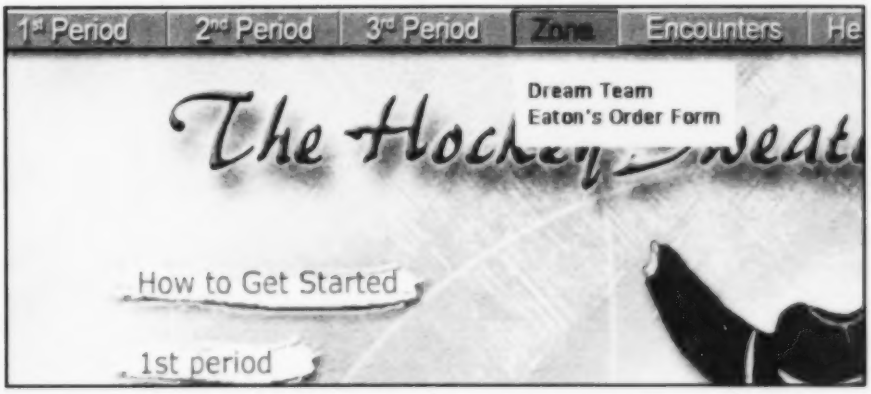
**The Hockey Sweater *CD-ROM For adult and pre-adult ESL learners alike. Based on Quebecois author Roch Carrier's famous story. Contains the full 10-minute animated film, interactive language learning activities, cultural information, multi-purpose dictionary, filmed interview with the author, and Stompin' Tom Connors' song, "The Good Ol' Hockey Game". $34.95 + $5.00 shipping. Ordering information: buymedia@ucalgary.ca***

**Teach a 2-hour class** about Canadian culture for a group of 25 international students ranging in level from beginner to advanced, they said. And what did I say? "Of course! No problem." (I'm working on my inability to say no, but it's a slow process!)

Luckily, this inability to say no came up the very next afternoon: "Would anyone consider reviewing the new CD-ROM of *The Hockey Sweater*?" was the question. This is why, a few weeks later, I find myself standing in front of a computer telling my students to go to the Start Menu and click on "The Hockey Sweater."

*(Continued on page 23)*

# CD-ROM: *The Hockey Sweater*




*(Continued from page 22)*

What is a CD-ROM?

A CD-ROM is a CD full of programs or activities designed to be used independently, and this one definitely contains a ton of things to do.

First, allow me to walk you through what *The Hockey Sweater* CD-ROM includes. It begins with a short introduction that tells students what to expect (How to Get Started). The student is then prompted to choose their own level of difficulty (Peewee for low beginners, Junior – for an Intermediate difficulty level, or Pro – Advanced level).

Once the choice is made, the CD-ROM program takes the student to a step-by-step plan suggesting what activities to do and in which order, geared to their self-selected level. After this introduction, the students have the option of going to various aspects of the content (1st, 2nd, and 3rd periods, the Zone, and Encounters).

In the "1st period," the students can view the 10-minute film version of the famous story by Quebecois author, Roch Carrier, review short video highlights taken from the animated film, match pictures and hockey vocabulary, answer oral comprehension questions, and match audio clips to pictures. (These activities are for all students and are not organized by level.) So, learners view, listen, read, and think.

In the "2nd period," in the "Exploring the Story" section, your students can follow the video and read the text at the same time. Also, divided by level, there are vocabulary matching activities (based on clothing, hockey, winter, and the home), plot puzzles, listen and fill-in-the-blank activities, multiple choice oral comprehension questions, and at the highest level an activity I found challenging – matching the hockey player to details about him or her (I knew only two out of 10!) Listening and reading are the two skills foci of this period.

In the "3rd period," there is a 14-page section on hockey, a recording of Stompin' Tom Connors' famous Hockey Song and an activity based on it. This period also contains 31 different hockey cards with details about each featured player. (That would have helped me in the

*(Continued on page 24)*

***"...learners view, listen, read, and think."***

# CD-ROM: *The Hockey Sweater*

(Continued from page 23)

"Hockey" section of the Pro level in the 2nd period! If I had read the hockey cards, I would have known that Henri Richard's name appears on the Stanley Cup 11 times!.)

You'll also find a Who am I? quiz about the hockey stars. Another element that's a lot of fun is a set of excerpts from the 1946-47 Eaton's catalogue where learners can chuckle over the styles, but also learn a lot of clothing vocabulary. This section also contains nine pages of readings about different aspects of Quebec and Canadian culture.

In the "Zone" section, the students can choose hockey players and make their own Dream Team as well as browse the Eaton's catalogue and fill out an order form.

Finally, in the "Encounters" section, the students can read and/or view an interview with the author Roch Carrier, learn about the story illustrator and film animator Sheldon Cohen, the translator, Sheila Fischman, and the Quebec naïve painter, Marcel Dargis.

***"At all times, the students have access to a dictionary..."***

At all times, the students have access to a dictionary with definitions, collocations, synonyms, antonyms, homonyms and derivatives, as well as a notebook for jotting down important points to remember. Lastly, there's also the "Let's Talk" section, that has 3 questions designed to stimulate discussion.

Okay, so that's your orientation. You can see from the outline that this CD-ROM offers a lot of activities in addition to the short film.

## What can I do with this CD-ROM?

The beauty of the CD-ROM is that it is designed to be used independently; the students should be able to use it without having a teacher walk them through it. But since you are teachers, you probably want to know how to use it with your class, right? So, here are some tips.

If you have a computer room with computers and headphones for your students, you will need to install the CD-ROM on the main computer and have it networked to all the monitors. (An important note, the cost of the CD-ROM does not cover the networking fee. This will cost you about $15 per student computer.)

Once the CD-ROM has been installed on all the computers, each student will have access to it. You can then explain the steps to them and let them enjoy the experience on their own.

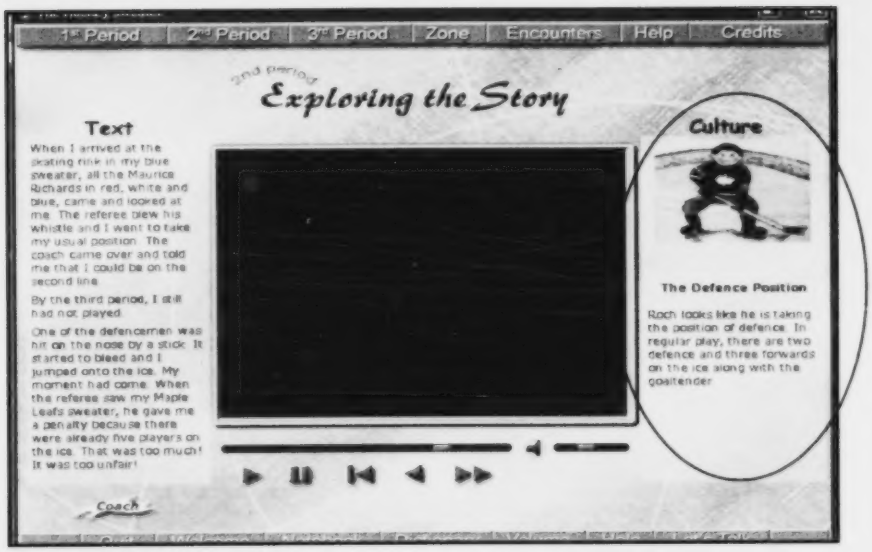
It's not necessary, but I created a short PowerPoint presentation of my own, to walk them through the activities offered. I also added some conversation questions to get the students talking before they started listening.

If you don't have a computer room, you could use the CD-ROM with a computer and projector hookup. In this case, the activities would all be group activities, and the students wouldn't be able to choose their own levels and work at their own pace.

I tried this CD-ROM with two different groups of students. Both groups included students from a variety of levels and programs – beginner to advanced, as well as comprehensive, teacher training, and business

(Continued on page 25)

# CD-ROM: *The Hockey Sweater*


1st Period
2nd Period
3rd Period
Zone
Encounters
Help
Credits
Exploring the Story
Text
When I arrived at the skating rink in my blue sweater, all the Maurice Richards in red, white and blue, came and looked at me. The referee blew his whistle and I went to take my usual position. The coach came over and told me that I could be on the second line.
By the third period, I still had not played.
One of the defencemen was hit on the nose by a stick. It started to bleed and I jumped onto the ice. My moment had come. When the referee saw my Maple Leafs sweater, he gave me a penalty because there were already five players on the ice. That was too much! It was too unfair!
Coach
Culture
The Defence Position
Roch looks like he is taking the position of defence. In regular play, there are two defence and three forwards on the ice along with the goaltender

*(Continued from page 24)*

students. The CD-ROM was a big success.

Here's how I set it up: I introduced the idea with a presentation of my own. I began with some vocabulary and conversation questions about hockey and Canada. They talked these through in groups, and then we discussed them together.

One of the conversation questions was about the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada. I supplied the background for this question. I find this to be one of the most interesting aspects of the CD-ROM, so I like them to have some background for thinking about the history of French-English relations in Canada as they watch. I then walked them through each section briefly, showed them the dictionary and outlined what I wanted them to do.

I asked that they watch the video first, then try at least one of the activities from both Period 1 and Period 2. Then I let them loose on the computers.

They really enjoyed watching the film and working on the activities. The different levels (Peewee, Junior, Pro) allowed the students to choose more or less challenging material. Almost all of them chose to listen again with the complete story text on the right (Exploring the Story, Period 2) and found it very useful.

After they had all watched the animated film of the story at least once and had tried some of the activities, I gave them some quotes from the film, and we discussed who said them and what the quotes really meant.

Finally, I presented some discussion questions and asked the students to talk about them. At the end of the lesson, many of the students stayed to continue working on other activities associated with the video, and some of the ones who left said they would try

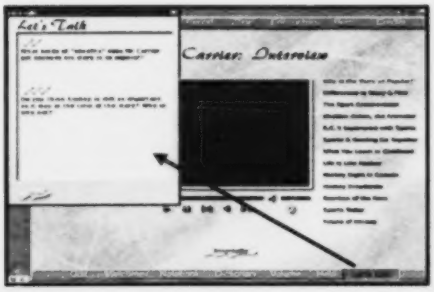
*(Continued on page 26)*

***"They really enjoyed watching the film and working on the activities."***

# CD-ROM: *The Hockey Sweater*

*(Continued from page 25)*

the program again at a later date, since we have it installed in the computer room for them to use whenever they wish.




### Can the CD-ROM stand on its own?

It depends. I'm sure that a reasonably techy student working independently would get a great deal of benefit from this CD-ROM. There are hours of activities and readings to keep a motivated student busy.

Having said that, I believe that by adding conversation and vocabulary points, and by talking to them as an English-Canadian who remembers the last referendum on Quebec separation, I was able to add something extra and make this CD-ROM an additional tool in my class, rather than the entire class itself.

***"As far as I'm concerned, already prepared resources are never perfect."***

As far as I'm concerned, already prepared resources are never perfect. I have yet to find a textbook I didn't have to supplement or a prepared lesson that I didn't think needed the addition of a little something. (It's the control freak in me, perhaps!) So, a CD-ROM is no different.

If you are the kind of person who can just walk into a class and teach from the teacher's text and make it work, then this CD-ROM is all you will need (and if you have some free time, could you tell me your secret?), but the rest of us will take this very useful tool, and make it even better.

### Were all the activities useful and appropriate?

I would say not quite, but there were so many activities that it didn't really matter that my students explored fewer than half of them. The CD-ROM tries to appeal to everyone, and I imagine some young student will love the extensive hockey card readings and then create a dream team, but this was not of interest to my group. Again, the vocabulary activities focused a bit too much on hockey terms, in my opinion, rather than on some of the more useful idiomatic expressions phrases that Roch Carrier uses (for example, I added "to do something out of spite" and "persecution"), but the readings about life in Quebec at that time were great.

### Were there any problems or glitches?

There were absolutely no problems with the technology. It was very smooth. I found that there was some missing information on the CD-ROM, but I think that this will be resolved when the teacher's manual is released. When you are exploring the story, the text appears on the left, and the word "Culture" appears on the right. But unless you click on the word "Culture" nothing ever appears there. Once you click the word "Culture" the text appears, and I'm sure they will explain this in the promised Teacher's Manual.

*(Continued on page 27)*

# CD-ROM: *The Hockey Sweater*

*(Continued from page 26)*

One other quibble I had with the activities was the fact the person reading the oral questions didn't use contractions. I found this made the questions sound stilted and unnatural. Perhaps they were trying to appeal to a beginner group, but as any ESL teacher can tell you, contractions are a natural part of speech and should be used with all levels of English language learners.

Finally, I was a bit confused about the questions that appear when you click on "Let's Talk". I had no idea that the questions changed as you explored different parts of the CD-ROM. I didn't use this aspect of the CD-ROM because I read the three questions that popped up when I was exploring and found them only mildly interesting.

Only by writing this review did I realize that not only did the questions change, based on what is happening on screen, but sometimes there were no discussion questions available and so the words are not highlighted in blue at those times.

I wish I had known about this aspect of the program when I used it in class because many of these "Let's Talk" questions were well worth using. I'm sure they will alert teachers to this in the teacher's manual, but just in case they don't, aren't you glad to have had a heads up?

### Why should I be bothered using technology in my class?

Well, I think the answer to that question will depend on your students. I introduce technology into my classes because I like the variety that comes with using different media. I also feel that this type of activity is of great benefit in a multi-level class because it allows each student to work at his or her own pace.

In addition, I think that these types of activities foster student autonomy. Perhaps if I introduce them to this tool, they will come back to it at a later date and learn some more. Another reason is that using a CD-ROM forces me to be less teacher-centred.

And finally, I teach young people and international professionals, most of whom hadn't seen anything as antiquated as an overhead projector before they came to Canada.

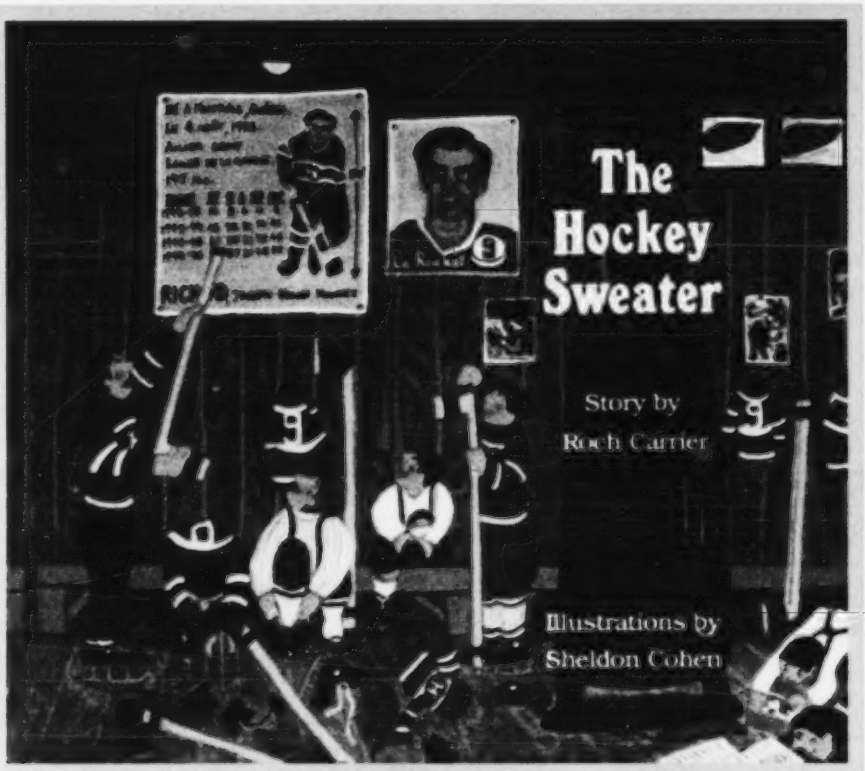
Most of them are much more familiar with newer types of technology than I am; they are very comfortable in this medium, so it makes them feel at home, and it buys me some much-needed credibility!

A win-win situation. ◊

*Karen Thomson has taught ESL to LINC and international students for over 12 years. She teaches with the English Language Program at the School of Continuing Studies at the University of Toronto.*

***"...many of these 'Let's Talk' questions were well worth using."***

# CD-ROM: *The Hockey Sweater*




***"...the story of a mail-order mix-up..."***

*The Hockey Sweater* is a short story written by renowned Canadian author Roch Carrier. It tells the story of a mail-order mix-up in the late 1940s when the T. Eaton Company sends a Toronto Maple Leaf hockey sweater to a hockey-mad ten-year-old boy, rather than the red, white and blue sweater of his beloved Montreal Canadiens hockey team ordered by the boy's mother. Needless to say, in Quebec of the 1940s, where hockey was a religion and the Canadiens' star player Maurice 'Rocket' Richard was a god, the mistake leads to heartbreak and humiliation.

When the boy appears at the village hockey rink draped in the blue and white uniform of the despised Toronto team, so incensed are the other boys that they exile him from the game. In anger he smashes his hockey stick on the ice, a display of temper that provokes the referee - the village priest – to send him packing to the church to cool off and seek forgiveness. Instead, the boy beseeches God to relieve his suffering by sending an infestation of moths to eat up the hated blue and white sweater of the enemy - the Toronto Maple Leafs!

Shortly after its publication in 1979, Roch Carrier's short story version of *The Hockey Sweater* (translated into English by Sheila Fischman) acquired such fame that it became a virtual monument to the cultural duality that had long defined Canada as a country. The story was soon re-published as a full-colour children's book, illustrated by Montreal artist and animator Sheldon Cohen. Soon after, the story was realized as a ten-minute animated film. The book version has remained popular ever since, and is still in print, more than 35 years later.

# Faith, Trust and Bicycles: Words From an ESL Activist

*by Kai Xing*

***Spin cycles: some language goes around in circles***

***"I think there must be some sort of conspiracy in the development of this language."***

**I came to Canada** from China over a decade ago to expand my horizons. Much growth has taken place since then, except that I'm still locked in a "detox" program. I have no idea when it'll end. My battle is not with drugs. Oh no!

It's much trickier than that.

I have a speech disorder caused by my dependence on using ESL (English as a Second Language). To be specific, it's a communication disorder and it has a name: it's called Chinglish (Chinese-English). Chinglish to me is like alcohol to a drunk. If I don't try to avoid it, or at least watch carefully how much I allow it in my system, I can easily end up talking funny and getting into troubles. It'd be nice if I could reduce the Chinglish content in my speech from a historical high of 65 per cent to hopefully below 0.05 per cent. So, eventually the words coming out of my mouth will be considered "non-intoxicating" and therefore safe enough for anyone to hear. Even children. But when, when will this ever happen?

Some days I'm quite eager to persevere in my "rehab" scheme. Other times, I'm depressed by my slow

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# Words From an ESL Activist

***Have faith, will travel***

*(Continued from page 29)*

progress or lapses. Once in a while I can't help but grow suspicious about why English is so hard to grasp.

***"...Who did this to you?"***

I think there must be some sort of conspiracy in the development of this language. Although not as whimsical as French, its irrational rules, its endless accessories, like the idioms and slang, its intricate verb patterns, parallel constructions, subjunctive mood... well, it's all quite maddening. Perhaps the creators of the English language crafted it specifically to confuse ESL speakers, test our nerves, and prevent us from ever getting a clue. So to us, the outsiders, English and its elements will forever remain like stormy weather and fast-changing clouds.

We'll never know exactly how wild it'll get or which cloud is going to rain on us. Even just a smallest technicality, say prepositions, which I fear and begrudge the most, can make us feel as if we were walking on black ice!

This past summer I went to a native Indian powwow for the first time in my life. My friends cautioned me beforehand to act with extra respect and courtesy at the event. Remembering this, I remained silent most of the morning. Soon feast time came along, and the general atmosphere at the ground became more relaxed. So did I.

While I was eating lunch, an aboriginal gentleman walked up to me and asked, "Are you Chinese? Can you read Chinese characters?" "Yes, yes," I replied politely, bowing forward. He then showed me his left forearm with a big smile, "Look what I've got!" It was a tattoo of two Chinese words that mean faith and trust.

The artwork wowed me, "Gee, who did this to you!" The man was taken aback by my comment.

After a long pause, he said emphatically, "Never mind. I think it is very nice and I like it very much!" Off he went.

Looking at his back, I had no clue how I'd offended him. Then an onlooker prompted, in a low voice, "Did you mean to say 'who did this *for* you'?" Damn the prepositions - those deceitfully insignificant little characters capable of destroying my confidence of ever speaking English!

After that incident, I vowed to take control of prepositions by studying my Chinese-English dictionary. I thought I'd start with an easy word like "take". Apparently, there are at least twenty-one prepositions we can use with take: *to, from, as, for, on, up*.... I felt it was a bit too much to take all that

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# Words From an ESL Activist

***Quite a character: ten dollars gets you, too, tattooed in a Chinese character. The phenomenon is global. In this case, the sign's in a shop window in Israel!***

*(Continued from page 30)*

in. My mind wanted to pick another easy word. How about 'mind'? As I proposed to myself, I tried my luck.

Boy, no luck! There are close to sixty phrases that involve all kinds of prepositions with the word "mind": at the back of one's *mind*, be of two *minds* about doing something, bend one's *mind* to something, have something in *mind* for something... and get this, in one's *mind's* eye! I couldn't help but laugh. How can one's mind have an eye? Besides, why only eye, why not eyes? Does this phrase suggest we are all narrow-minded because our mind has just one eye?

Gee, if this is not mind-boggling, I don't know what is! I was getting a bit irritated. I don't need to get lost in this maze. Maybe I'll try just one more word, a no-brainer. And hopefully it'll be piece of cake.

I flipped to the page in my dictionary for my most favorite scrabble word, "go". Or should I have said "pages"? There are six-and-a-half pages devoted to explaining what goes with "go". Seriously. Can you believe it? "That's it! No more prepositions! Starting today, I'll avoid using any, no matter what!" I made my ultimatum without one preposition—not too bad, eh?

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***"Don't get me wrong: I know avoiding prepositions completely is unrealistic in the long run."***

# Words From an ESL Activist

(Continued from page 31)

Don't get me wrong: I know avoiding prepositions completely is unrealistic in the long run. I guess I'll just have to muddle through them while I close my eyes, hoping for the best.

Turning a blind eye on prepositions does help me save some energy, albeit not much. I am exhausted by the chaotic complexity of the English language, let alone ongoing imports from other languages. On top of all this, I still have to own up to the consequences of my unintentional word creation, misunderstanding of concepts and whatnot. Progress is so hard to come by. It's plain hopeless.

So tonight, under the influence of a full moon, I've made up my mind. I'm throwing in the towel! For good!

***"Only people who were born into this language should be cursed to carry the cross on their back and be judged by their congregation."***

What will I lose if I may never be able to speak authentic English? Only people who were born into this language should be cursed to carry the cross on their back and be judged by their congregation. I'm from a different club.

I quite enjoy the ambiance and ease when I'm surrounded by other fellow ESL speakers. With them, I'm comfortably oblivious to the fact that I don't know better when it comes to the inside workings of the English language, and most of the time neither do they. Which serves me just great, as they are easy to fool (sorry, I mean, please). I can speak my mind freely without worrying how I should word things. This is what I call total freedom of speech in a democratic country.

Honestly, I don't see the advantages native English speakers have over us, the ESLers. We have a unique, free flowing and effective way of speaking. As long as we get our points crossed, the grammar, phrasing, order of words — in fact, all this cumbersome stuff is unnecessary.

For instance, a Chinese ESLer who doesn't speak Korean and a Korean ESLer who understands no Mandarin can communicate with each other just fine through equally comprehensible Chinglish and Koreglish (Korean-English). Recently my Korean friend, Agnes, a new immigrant to Canada, paid me a surprise visit. It was just after suppertime when she buzzed the speaker for my apartment.

As I greeted her over the intercom she shouted in excitement, "Quick come, churchy, Korin penist, four finger!" Hearing that, I flew downstairs. As soon as I reached the lobby, Agnes bobbed her head fast and dragged me to the door. While I speed-walked with her I almost figured it all out--we have to rush to a concert held in a church featuring a Korean pianist.

Except, what's with the "four finger"? So I asked Agnes, "Pianist only use four finger play?" She nodded, "Yiesss." "So, not use the rest six finger play?" I tried to clarify with her. Agnes gestured with her fingers and confirmed, "Yiesss. She only four finger play." Intriguing! I couldn't wait to see. Soon after we arrived at the church, I was more than intrigued by what I saw.

The 20-year-old Korean pianist, Lee Hee-ah, was born with only four fingers--a thumb and a baby finger on each hand! And her feet grew directly from her thighs! Her performance inspired the entire audience and blew my mind off. As the night ended, I was

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# Words From an ESL Activist

***Four fingers at the ready***

*(Continued from page 32)*

so grateful that Agnes had invited me to the concert and made my day.

Aren't you impressed that two ESL speakers can easily utter several words in random order to each other and enjoy just the right dosage of clarity and suspense? Can native English speakers rise to the occasion? No offense, but I doubt it. I have proof: one day in the first week after I arrived in Canada, I went to apply for my social insurance number.

As I rode my bike, a driver rolled down a window of his car and shouted, "One-way!"

At first I had no idea whom he was yelling at, or what he meant. So I kept going.

A while later a pedestrian and I both reached an intersection at the same time. As we stopped and waited for the light to change, she stared at me sternly and pointed at a street sign. I looked up and saw a big arrow pointing in the opposite direction from which we were heading. "So?" I still couldn't get it. She then pointed at the traffic and reinforced, "It's a one-way street! Can't you see? You're riding against the traffic. It's dangerous!" Finally it hit me (before a car did) that I had broken the law and disturbed the world peace.

Had some Chinglish master witnessed the situation, it wouldn't have taken him nearly as long to enlighten me. He would have simply bellowed out at the start, "Riding Bicycle's fool, you direction walk opposite!" That way, I would have immediately understood everything and gotten off the road.

What troubles me is: although we, the ESLers, enjoy our ease and know-how in speaking Chinglish, Koreglish and alike, English language authority figures don't quite approve. They think we need to learn to speak and appreciate the authentic English. They see it their duty to correct us when our English makes no sense (according to them of course). And when we've abandoned what works for us (in our minds anyway), they seem so glad that finally we've come to our senses.

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***"Aren't you impressed that two ESL speakers can easily utter several words in random order to each other and enjoy just the right dosage of clarity and suspense?"***

# Words From an ESL Activist

***One way!***

***"English language authority figures don't quite approve..."***

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The subject of authenticity reminds me of decaf coffee, artificial sweetener, soya meat, laminated hardwood floors, oh and of course, silicon boobs. People know these aren't "the real thing"; they want them anyway. Perhaps they prefer them. Perhaps we should send our English teachers some "Chinese" fortune cookies (invented in America) or "Italian" glass figurines (made in China), and see if they like them. And if they do, maybe they'll get the hint and let us speak our imitation English the way we like.

Or maybe not—maybe they'll change their argument now. They'll probably say their problem with our imitation English is not so much that it's unauthentic as that it's broken. Well, as far as we think, the authentic English is already broken without our help.

For example, listen to this dialogue: "Isn't he something!" one exclaims. Then comes a definite response, "Let me tell ya, he sure is something else!" Are the two people here in agreement or opposition? Or both?

Here's another one: why do we have to say "a pair of pants" instead of "a pant"? I'm told because we have two legs, "pants" are always plural. I see. Then why don't we also say "a pair of shirts" rather than "a shirt"? We have

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# Words From an ESL Activist

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two arms, don't we? So arms count less than legs do in the authentic English world?

And what do you think when people say, "It'll first cool down then freeze up"? Shouldn't it be "freeze down", as cold air stays low and things shrink in size when frozen?

Oh, English language authorities, please don't feel I'm attempting to beat you up or put you down here, as I'm certainly not sure if either is the best way to go. I'm only trying to help you reflect upon your mother tongue. Perhaps you realize that your authentic English is not any less broken than our imitation English. You break it your way and we break it our way. It's only a matter of choice in style; that's all.

Isn't choice a great thing! That's why people prefer to live in the free world. We're free to choose. If native English speakers—knowing how crazy their language is—choose to be content about it and make do with what they've got, so can we, the ESLers, with our Chinglish, Koreglish and so forth. I actually quite look forward to having tons of fun getting together with my people.

So, come on ESL activists! Let's put up our declaration on the door to our hall of fame: "ESL Schoolars Only. Miscellaneous peoples not enter!" Let's enjoy our freedom of speech.

If any speak-so-called-pure-English's local people dare come knock our door and against our sign make nasty comment, we then first politely smile a smile then to them say, "Shovel off!" ◊

**Kai Xing, my 'adopted Chinese daughter', has been blowing like a strong fresh wind in and out of my family home since 1992. My daughter Lisa first met Kai at the Beijing Institute of Technology. At the time, Lisa was leading an English language conversation class for undergraduate students there. Kai sat in the front row of the class each evening and initiated conversation at every opportunity. Kai's parents soon welcomed Lisa into their Beijing home and Kai appointed herself as my daughter's official guide to the city. Kai subsequently arrived in my hometown of Kingston, Ontario to take a master's degree at Queen's University and from that point became an honorary member of my family.**

**— Margaret Meyer, Kingston**

*Kai Xing was born, raised and educated in Beijing, China. She came to Canada in 1992 to pursue her Master's degree in urban and regional planning under a fellowship offered by Queen's University. Since 1995 she has been working in the field of Sino-Canadian business development. Her bicultural life exposure has served a great purpose in helping her rediscover her creativity through writing. As she continues to write in her second language, she hopes her writing will in turn help her reflect upon who she is and grow into who she can be.*

***"Let's enjoy our freedom of speech!"***

*RESEARCH:*

# Sources of Variability in Second Language Writing: Learner and Task Characteristics

*by Khaled Barkaoui*

*This paper reviews research on two major sources of variability in second-language (L2) learners' writing performance: individual differences across learners and variation across writing tasks. The paper emphasizes the importance of taking these sources of variability into account when planning lessons, developing teaching and assessment materials, evaluating students' performance and development, and giving feedback in the L2 writing classroom.*

***"Second language learners bring a variety of cognitive, affective, linguistic and socio-cultural factors to the classroom..."***

**Teaching second** language (L2) writing is both a fascinating and challenging task, not least because of the diverse population of students that attend writing classrooms today. This diversity manifests itself not only in the linguistic and socio-cultural differences that students contribute, but also in the diverse ways that these students learn and perform in the L2 writing classroom. As both experience and research show, there is a great variability in the writing processes that L2 learners employ and the characteristics of the texts they produce. This paper reviews research that attempts to explain this variability with reference to two major factors - learner traits and task characteristics. The primary goal of this paper is to draw teachers' attention to the importance of these two factors in L2 writing performance and development and to urge instructors to take them into consideration when planning lessons, selecting or developing teaching and assessment materials, evaluating students' performance and development, and giving feedback in the L2 writing classroom.

## Individual Differences Across L2 Learners

Second language learners bring a variety of cognitive, affective, linguistic and socio-cultural factors to the classroom that are likely to affect how and what they learn and write in the L2. These factors include learner gender, age, personality, aptitude, linguistic, cultural, and educational background, learning experiences, writing and literacy experiences, L2 attitudes and motivation, cognitive and metacognitive skills, language awareness, personal goals, and so on. To illustrate how these factors can affect the writing processes and texts of L2 learners, this paper reviews empirical findings concerning three learner factors:

- learner language background,
- beliefs and attitudes,
- past learning and writing experiences.

The goal of this review is to direct teachers' attention to the important role that learners' characteristics play in shaping their L2 writing performance and development in the L2 writing classroom.

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# Sources of Variability in Second Language Writing

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Several studies, comparing learners from different first-language (L1) backgrounds and English native-speakers (NSE), have found that the writer's L1 affects the linguistic and rhetorical features of his/her L2 text. Reid (1990), for example, comparing the English writing of Arab, Chinese, English, and Spanish students of English, found that the essays of the four language groups varied in terms of their fluency and syntactic and lexical features. Similarly, Frase et al. (1999) found significant stylistic differences in the writing of learners from different L1 backgrounds in terms of directness, expressiveness, and academic stance. Scarcella (1984) reported significant differences in the way writers from different L1 backgrounds orient their readers and attempt to engage their attention in the introductions to their L2 expository essays. Finally, Silva (1992b, in Grabe and Kaplan 1996, 239) lists six main differences between texts written by ESL and NSE students:

1. organizational preferences,
2. approaches to argument structuring,
3. approaches to incorporating material from text into writing (e.g., paraphrasing, quoting),
4. perspectives on reader orientation, attention-getting devices, and estimates of reader knowledge,
5. use of cohesion markers, and
6. use of overt linguistic features such as subordination and conjunction.

There is now ample empirical evidence that texts written by L2 learners from different L1 backgrounds differ on some or all of these aspects (Grabe and Kaplan 1996). It is important, however, that teachers interpret these findings with caution and avoid overgeneralizations and stereotyping (Casanave 2004). In addition, it is important to remember that individuals from different discourse communities within the same language tend to employ the features listed above in qualitatively and quantitatively different ways.

The goals and beliefs that L2 learners bring to the classroom have also been found to affect their learning and engagement in the L2 writing classroom. Learners may bring a variety of goals for and beliefs about language learning, the nature and importance of writing, the second language, differences between writing in L1 and L2, instruction, roles in the classroom, as well as their own writing competence. Individuals with different goals and beliefs seem to learn and perform differently. Cumming (2006), for example, demonstrates how learners' goals for learning L2 writing affect their views about L2 writing, their writing performance, and self-evaluation of their L2 texts.

Similarly, several studies have shown that learners who feel competent about writing are more motivated to write, set higher writing goals for themselves, expend more effort, and persist longer when facing difficult writing tasks, while students who do not feel as confident tend to avoid difficult tasks, which they perceive as personal threats, and to have low aspirations and weak commitment to the

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***"...learners who feel competent about writing are more motivated to write, set higher writing goals for themselves, expend more effort, and persist longer..."***

# Sources of Variability in Second Language Writing

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goals they choose to pursue (Dornyei, 2001; Zimmerman and Bandura, 1994). In a case study of two L2 learners, Selfe (1986) found that the less confident writer employed a very limited range of writing and reading strategies and employed them less productively in his writing than did the more confident writer. Similarly, Victori (1999), in a study comparing the writing beliefs and knowledge of skilled and unskilled L2 writers, found that the skilled writers had a much broader view of their own writing problems, the nature and requirements of the writing task, and their own approach to writing. These views seemed to be advantageous to their organization of ideas. The less effective writers, in contrast, appeared to hold naïve beliefs that seemed to inhibit their performance. For instance, one of the skilled writers was convinced of the usefulness of outlines, so she preferred to sketch her ideas in an outline to guide her writing. One of the less-skilled writers, in contrast, believed that she should rely on inspiration to define her topic, so she did not use an outline, but rather followed her stream of consciousness in creating her essay.

***"Learners goals and beliefs are shaped to a large extent by their personal, educational, and cultural background."***

Learners' goals and beliefs are shaped to a large extent by their personal, educational, and cultural background as well as previous learning and assessment experiences; for example, teaching methods, teaching and testing materials, type of feedback (Horwitz 1999; Porte 1997; Roca De Larios, Murphy, and Marin 2002; Silva 1992a; Victori 1999).

Learners' previous learning and writing experiences have also been found to contribute to variability in their L2 writing performance. Cumming (1989), for example, found that both L2 proficiency and L1 writing expertise impact on L2 learners' writing processes and texts. Cumming's findings suggest that as L2 learners become more proficient in the L2, the quality of their L2 writing tends to improve and that learners with more L1 writing expertise tend to write better L2 texts than those with little writing experience. Similarly, Roca De Larios, Murphy, and Marin (2002) summarize research suggesting that unskilled L2 writers' past learning experiences and received feedback may explain their narrow concern with surface considerations when revising their texts, and that the limited opportunities for writing these writers have often had might affect their L2 writing beliefs and performance. More proficient writers, by contrast, often have extensive experiences as readers and writers in both L1 and L2. Porte (1996, 1997), examining the possible reasons for the poor revision behaviors (e.g. focus on surface errors) of less-skilled L2 writers, found that the revision strategies these writers use may be initiated by their past and present learning experiences and perceived teacher preferences in teaching methodology, feedback, and assessment. Thus, the various teaching and assessment approaches that learners experience are likely to result in more variability in terms of L2 writing processes and outcomes.

Other learner factors, such as gender, personality and age also affect what and how L2 learners write. Carrell (1995), for instance, in a study investigating the effects of writer personality types (introvert vs. extrovert) on essay holistic scores, found that intro-

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verted students tended to write longer narrative essays than the extroverts and that they obtained higher scores. As for age effects, Torras and Celaya (2001), in a study that examined the effects on L2 writing achievement of the age at which learners initiated their contact with the L2 (ages 8 and 11), found that the two groups differed in their rate and level of attainment. Analyses of students' texts indicated that both groups presented lower development in complexity and accuracy than in fluency, but that there were differences in their rate and attainment, possibly due to the effect of age. Older learners were faster learners and progressed further.

## Variation Across L2 Writing Tasks

Writing tasks vary at several levels: wording, genre (e.g., letter, essay), rhetorical context (e.g., audience, purpose), stimulus material (e.g., listening, reading, graphs), and discourse mode (e.g., argument, narration). There is evidence that variability in the linguistic and rhetorical specifications of the writing task affects the writing processes and texts of L2 learners (Brossell 1986; Weigle 2002). For example, in comparing the writing processes of L2 students when writing in both a narrative and an argumentative task, Raimes (1987) found that the narrative task led to more planning, rehearsing, revising, and editing. The argumentative task, in contrast, elicited more rescanning and rereading of the assignment. Cumming (1989) also reported a significant effect of task mode and rhetorical requirements on the level of attention L2 learners paid to different aspects of writing (e.g. language, gist, discourse) and the range and type of problem-solving behaviors they used while composing in the L2. The more cognitively demanding tasks (an argumentative essay and a summary of a popular science booklet) elicited greater attention to the different aspects of writing and significantly more heuristic search strategies than did the less demanding task (an informal descriptive letter).

Task requirements have also been shown to affect the degree of L1 switching and use in L2 writing as well as the degree of writer emotional involvement. Krapels (1990), for instance, argues that writing tasks that are related to culture-bound topics elicit more L1 use when writing in the L2 than other tasks do. Woodall (2002) showed that L1 switching is a function of task difficulty as well as writers' L2 proficiency and the similarity between L1 and L2. Clachar (1999) found that emotional topics motivated L2 students to focus on the lower, lexicomorphosyntactic level of discourse processing in order to represent their intended meaning accurately and faithfully, while non-emotional topics led students to focus on the elaboration of higher order goals and to allocate more attention to audience and text structure. As a result, the essays on the emotional topics in her study had fewer syntactic, morphological, and lexical errors than did the non-emotional topics.

Several studies have examined the effects of task factors, such as discourse mode, content, rhetorical specification, and genre on the characteristics of L2 learners' texts. The findings

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***"Older learners were faster learners and progressed further."***

# Sources of Variability in Second Language Writing

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of these studies are mixed, but they generally suggest that task requirements affect the linguistic and rhetorical characteristics of L2 learners' texts.

To illustrate how task characteristics can affect learners' L2 texts, I will highlight empirical findings concerning the effects of five major task factors: discourse mode, audience, wording, content, and input material. In terms of discourse mode, Reid (1990) found that a task that asked L2 students to describe and interpret a graph/chart elicited language features that are characteristic of highly abstract, formal academic prose (e.g., longer words, more pronouns), while a task that asked them to compare/contrast and take a position elicited more informal and concrete discourse (e.g., more content words). Park (1988), comparing the same tasks, found that the comparison/contrast task resulted in longer elaborations than the graph task. Park attributed these findings, however, to the fact that the first task provided general information while the graph task provided more specific information. Way et al. (2000) found significant differences in L2 texts written in response to narrative, expository, and descriptive tasks in terms of length, fluency, accuracy, syntactic complexity, and overall quality. The descriptive task resulted in significantly higher holistic scores and longer, syntactically more accurate essays. The expository essays, in contrast, showed high syntactic complexity but extremely low grammatical accuracy.

Another task dimension that has been found to affect students' L2 texts is audience. In a study that assessed the effects of the age of the intended addressee on L2 texts, Porter and O'Sullivan (1999) asked Japanese university students to write letters to readers older, younger, and the same age as themselves. Analysis of the resulting letters revealed systematic variability in their orthography, content, and linguistic features. The letters written to older readers were longer and received significantly higher scores. There was a clear trend towards a systematic simplification of the text (in terms of content, vocabulary, and language use), depending on the perceived age of the intended reader. Also, there was a tendency to personalize parts of the body of the text written to a similar-aged reader. As Grabe and Kaplan (1996) have argued, audience parameters (e.g., the extent to which readers are known or unknown, and the status of the reader in relation to the writer) play an important role in textual variation.

Task wording, content, and input material have also been found to affect L2 learners' texts. Hinkel (2002), comparing essays by NSE and L2 students on six tasks that differed in terms of wording and content (parents, grades, wealth, manners, opinions, and major college subject), found that L2 text quality is determined by the grammar and vocabulary of the task itself, as students tended to insert the lexis and grammatical constructions of the task into their own texts, and that more personal topics resulted in more personal style, while topics that were more distant from the students' personal experiences led to L2 essays closer to NSE uses of language features. Contrary to common belief, Hinkel concludes that "the greater a

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***"...text quality is determined by the grammar and vocabulary of the task itself..."***

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writer's familiarity and experience with a topic is and the easier it is to write about, the simpler the text can be" (241).

Tedick (1990) also investigated the extent to which L2 students' writing performance is affected by their knowledge of the subject matter of the topic. Students from different levels of L2 proficiency responded to two topics, one general and one specific to their field of study. The results showed that, in general, students performed better when they were expected to use their prior knowledge. The field-specific topic resulted in higher holistic scores, longer essays for the beginning and intermediate students, and more syntactic complexity for the advanced students. As for task input materials, Cumming et al. (2005) found significant differences in terms of lexical and syntactic complexity, argument structure, orientation to evidence, and use of source texts when comparing essays produced by L2 students in response to integrated (i.e., reading- and listening-based) and independent writing tasks. Campbell (1990) found that the paraphrases, near copies, quotations, and exact copies of L2 students in a reading-based writing task produced momentary elaborative discourse within the context of their otherwise simpler language.

Learners' L2 writing performance is also likely to vary depending on why (e.g., test, classroom activity), where and when the writing is done (e.g., classroom, home), time constraints, medium of writing (pen-and-paper vs. computer), whether the writer has access to resources (e.g., dictionaries, references), whether writing is done individually or in a group, and so on. For example, Chastain (1990) reported that students tended to write more and to produce longer and more complex sentences when their papers were to be graded than when no grades were expected. The effect of anticipating a grade was not significant on essay content and organization and the number and type of errors, however. Kroll (1990), comparing papers produced by the same students in class under time pressure and at home over a 10-14 day period, found that the home papers were better organized although, overall, there were no significant differences between the two sets of papers in terms of scores and text features (e.g., type, range, and frequency of grammatical errors).

Finally, several recent studies have shown that the use of the computer as a writing tool can affect the writing performance of L2 writers. For instance, in a study that compared the composing processes and written products of six Korean students of English across composition modes (handwritten and word processed), Lee (2002) found that the students produced longer essays and engaged in different processes when using the computer than when handwriting their essays although there was no significant difference in essay scores across modes. In particular, the students spent less time on pre-writing on the computer, but needed more time to think during text production. In addition, planning and text production on the computer were more interwoven than they were on paper. Li (2006) also reported that the 21 adult Chinese advanced students of English in her study paid more attention to higher order

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***"The effects of the use of the computer on L2 writing processes and texts may depend on...writer L2 proficiency, writing expertise, time constraints, and so on."***

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thinking activities while evaluating their written texts, revised significantly more at most levels, and obtained higher scores in argumentation when they word processed their essays. The effects of the use of the computer on L2 writing processes and texts may depend on other writer and task factors, such as writer L2 proficiency, writing expertise, time constraints, and so on.

## Implications

The primary goal of this paper is to draw teachers' attention to how individual differences and task variation affect learners' engagement, performance and development in the L2 writing classroom. In this regard, teachers should be aware that variability across learners affects not only their L2 writing processes and texts, but also how they read, interpret and respond to writing tasks and teacher feedback. Students from different backgrounds have been found to have different representations, goals, and reactions to the same writing task (Bloor and Bloor 1991; Brossell 1986; Connor and Kramer 1995). For instance, Connor and Kramer (1995) found that the task representation of L2 students in a reading-to-write task differed from that of NSE students and that students' prior knowledge, personal experiences, cultural and educational background, and L2 proficiency might affect the way they interpret tasks, what and how much to write, and what constitutes a successful completion of a task. As for feedback, Myles (2002) cautions that the effectiveness of teacher response to student writing may depend on various contextual and learner factors such as students' level of motivation, current L2 proficiency, cognitive style, learning experiences, and attitudes to teacher and class, as well as the clarity of the feedback itself (cf. Hyland 1998; Hyland and Hyland 2001).

Second, it is essential, as Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) have argued, that teachers take the different backgrounds, experiences, and expectations that students bring to the L2 writing classroom into account when planning L2 writing courses, selecting or developing teaching materials and approaches, designing reading and writing assignments, constructing assessment instruments, evaluating students' L2 writing performance and development, and providing feedback to L2 writers. Being aware of and sensitive to learners' diverse experiences, backgrounds and needs is more likely to enhance students' motivation, engagement, performance, and development in the L2 writing classroom (Dornyei 2001; Hyland 2002).

Third, great care should be exercised when designing or selecting tasks to elicit writing performance for teaching or assessment purposes. Teachers need to keep in mind the purpose(s) for which the task will be used and to make sure that the characteristics of the task (e.g., wording, addressee, discourse mode, content) will teach or elicit the desired writing aspect or competency (see Reid and Kroll 1995 and Ruth and Murphy 1988 for guidelines on how to design writing tasks for learning and assessment purposes).

Finally, teachers should support their diverse students by (a) carefully structuring and contextualizing

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***"Teachers need to keep in mind the purpose(s) for which the task will be used..."***

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the writing tasks and activities they use (e.g., provide clear and specific audience and purpose); (b) making the goals of these tasks explicit (e.g., through discussion); (c) being specific and explicit about the writing aspects and competencies they are teaching or assessing; (d) presenting teaching and assessment materials clearly; (e) offering opportunities for multiple drafts, peer responses, revisions, and explicit, focused feedback; (f) teaching students how to interpret and respond to writing tasks and feedback; and (g) explaining the expectations for the writing tasks they assign. Teachers need also to be aware of the contextual factors that can influence the writing performance and development of students, such as time constraints, writing mode, and access to resources. Such practices can only enhance students' engagement, learning, and development in the L2 writing classroom. ◊

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# Teaching Religion in the Schools: Models to Inform the Canadian Context

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**The events of Sept.** 11, 2001 focused the attention of the world on how religion and culture can lead individuals to commit acts of violence that people find abhorrent. This act should not be seen as an isolated incident but rather as the expression of a hegemonic frustration that has been fomenting for a long period of time. The dimming of Islamic influence and Muslim culture (in much of the world) with the arrival of Western European ideas, the inability of successive leaders in Muslim states to renew their societies from within, and the absence in many Muslim countries of a voice for the people have contributed to the birth of radical movements as a response to the domination and politics of the Western world. In addition, the rise of fundamentalist movements with religious overtones around the world, the displacement of traditional Christian churches by evangelical ones, the blurring of the separation of church and state in countries such as the U.S. (Shalet, 2006), the affirmation of individual rights, and changing immigration patterns leading to a rapid diversification and cultural pluralism of many countries have helped to destabilize once homogeneous societies (e.g., France, Germany, U.S.). Such phenomena have led people to challenge laws, traditions, values and beliefs in the name of religion and culture (See Appendix 1 for a list developed by Thomas (2006))[1]

> *Few things have done more harm than the belief on the part of individuals and groups (or tribes or states or nations or churches) that he or she or they are in sole possession of the truth... It is a terrible and dangerous arrogance to believe that you are right, have a magical eye which sees the truth, and that others cannot be right if they disagree.*
>
> *Jonathan Sacks (2002, p.345)*

One arena in which these challenges have appeared is in public education.[2] We are all familiar with parents who object to their children having to attend classes on sex education because what is presented in class contradicts their religious beliefs. The same arguments are used for withdrawing students from class for Valentine's Day or Hallowe'en celebrations. In history class, objections are raised when the subject of genocide is discussed, with certain groups claiming that such events never took place. In science, pressure is being put on school boards and governments to teach creationism and intelligent design alongside evolution as possible explanations for the

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***"In history class, objections are raised when the subject of genocide is discussed, with certain groups claiming that such events never took place."***

1. Thomas's book arrived at our library at the time I was completing this article. He discusses in detail religious controversies in fourteen different countries around the world, providing context, origins of the conflicts, conflicting positions and possible solutions. An excellent, highly readable overview of these issues.
2. Recent research on religion in prisons in Great Britain and France (Beckford, Joly and Khosrokhavar. 2005; Beckford, 1999; Beckford and Gilliat, 1998) has shown that similar issues exist in prisons in these countries regarding access to religious services and the role they should play.

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origin of the human species. While some of these phenomena are certainly more significant than others, they are all symptomatic of our rapidly changing world. The pace and impact of these changes is strengthened by the new technologies (Friedman, 2006) that provide instant access to events around the world and enable even the weakest of people to have a "voice" if they have access to this technology. For some, religion and culture have become the new tools used to achieve their objectives, even if in so doing they trample the rights of others (see the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in the Malcolm Ross case, *Supreme Court Reports*, 1996).

In the fields of multicultural and antiracism education, religion has not received the same focussed attention as other factors (e.g., race, gender, class, ethnicity) but developments, such as those mentioned above are forcing all stakeholders to examine what role, if any, religion should play within schools and classrooms. In what follows, I will first review some different models for dealing with religion in the schools in a sampling of western countries with large immigrant populations. I will specifically consider the model of *laïcité*, as implemented in France, the model of explicitly faith-based schools, as well as a number of paradigms which fall under the general rubric of "accommodation models." I will then consider how such models can be used to formulate a coherent approach to teaching religion in the schools.

## Laïcité

Since the French Revolution, France has had as a policy, though not always a practice, of a strict separation of church and state called, *laïcité* (secularity). According to this principle, state-school systems should be "religion neutral". Adherents of this principle assert that there should be no religious symbols or manifestation of religions in state-supported schools. As a consequence, teachers are not allowed use their religious beliefs to influence what and how they teach, and students cannot wear any form of religious symbol that might impact on the religious freedom of other students in the school.

The *Loi de Séparation des Églises et de l'État* passed in 1905 has remained in effect except for the period during World War II (1940-1944) when France was under the régime led by Marshal Pétain. The main points of that law were as follows:

1. No religion can be supported by the state, either by financial aid or political support.
2. Everyone has the right to follow a religion, but no one has an obligation to do so.
3. Religious education at school is strictly forbidden.
4. No new religious symbols are to be placed in public places, including cemeteries. (www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A2903663)

In the post-war years, the arrival in France of a large number of immigrants who were followers of Islam put pressure on the French government to modify its position on the presence of religious symbols in the schools. In 1992, the *Conseil d'état* judged that the law forbidding the

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***"...religion has not received the same focussed attention as other factors..."***

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wearing of religious symbols in state schools was illegal. As a result of a subsequent judgment, students were allowed to wear "discreet but not ostentatious" religious symbols such as the veil, the Star of David, or the crucifix. This decision, however, did not end the debate. Race-related tensions have been periodically aggravated by other developments in French society, most notably the rise of anti-Semitism, increased levels of discrimination, and the discriminatory treatment of young immigrant women.

To deal with these problems, Jacques Chirac, then President of France, set up *La commission Stasi* in 2003 to conduct an in-depth study of the stakeholders in schools, prisons, hospitals, schools and businesses regarding the principle of *laïcité*. The Commission's final report included four key recommendations with direct implications for the school system (numbers 1 to 4 below) and four others with broader social implications (numbers 5 to 8):

1. the prohibition of ostentatious forms of religious symbols in *lycées* (public secondary schools) and colleges;
2. the development of new interdisciplinary/interfaith approaches to the teaching of religious ideas as they relate to the teaching of French and history;
3. respect for the dietary restrictions dictated by religious beliefs in schools, prisons, hospitals, etc.;
4. recognition of the most important religious holidays of other major religions;
5. the creation of a set of guidelines (*Chartre de laïcité*) defining the rights and responsibilities of all citizens; it is to have the status of a set of guidelines as opposed to a law;
6. the creation of an agency that would have as its aim the elimination of the social and physical ghettoization of certain groups;
7. the guarantee of state-supported schools for all citizens of the country;
8. the creation of support organizations that foster the mixing of different groups as opposed to those that set up activities that focus on their community alone. (Stasi, 2003)

***"The principal objective in reaffirming the principle of laïcité, especially within the school system, was to ensure neutrality as concerns the treatment of all faiths..."***

The principal objective in reaffirming the principle of *laïcité*, especially within the school system, was to ensure neutrality as concerns the treatment of all faiths. One of the ways they hoped to achieve this objective was through the banning of all "ostentatious" or "conspicuous" symbols of religious adherence within the lycées and colleges. In their concluding remarks, *La commission Stasi* states:

> *It is a question of reconciling national unity with respect for diversity. As the principle of laïcité creates the possibility of a common existence (une vie ensemble), it takes on a new reality. Living together in harmony has become a national priority. (Stasi, 2003, 66)*

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The principle of *laïcité* has not met with the approval of all citizens in France. Many Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders see the ban on the wearing of religious symbols as being cosmetic - attacking the superficial to avoid having to deal with the substantial. Muslim leaders see it as an indirect attack against their presence in France, reflecting the negative attitudes that many French harbour against them. There is also opposition to the policy of *laïcité*, arguing that it promotes secularism, an ideology that denies any role to religion in society, including the school system.

In our context, the question arises: Is *laïcité* a possible option for the Ontario school system? Would adopting such a policy level the playing field in terms of accommodating different faiths? Would designated areas for prayer have to be removed from the schools? Would any mention of God or religion at school ceremonies be banned? Would the adoption of such a policy promote more harmonious communities within our schools? These are only of a few of the questions that would have to be addressed in the Ontario/Canadian context.

## Faith-based Schools

The term "faith-based school" is somewhat elusive, difficult to circumscribe in a precise way. As Naomi Schaffer-Riley (2005) pointed out in her book *God on the Quad*, it is very difficult to speak in general terms about faith-based schools, as they include within their purview both those that require that students and professors adhere strictly to the beliefs and practices espoused by the school and those that one hardly recognizes as being faith-based at all. While the network of faith-based colleges is not as extensive in Canada as in the U.S., we do have a long tradition of private schools having a religious focus. Currently, or in the past, Canada has had Islamic, Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Sikh, Christian, Pentecostal, Seventh Day Adventist, Salvation Army, Mennonite, and Hutterite schools, to name a few. While some of these schools have had constitutional guarantees for funding, others have always been privately funded.

In Ontario and throughout Canada the private school system, both religious and secular, has grown rapidly in the last two decades. There are a number of reasons for this growth, the principal one being parents' insistence that it is their right under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms to be able to decide the type of religious education that their children should receive. Sweet (1996) lists other reasons given by proponents of faith- based schools that explain their rapid growth:

- Secular schools are not themselves value-neutral, because secularism is based on a set of values.
- Public schools do not allow for the presentation of a wide variety of religious beliefs.
- Teachers of religious education are not deeply informed in the content of the different faiths; moreover, their pres-

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***"While the network of faith-based colleges is not as extensive in Canada as in the U.S., we do have a long tradition of private schools having a religious focus."***

3. My translation of the French text.

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entations are knowledge-based as opposed to experienced-based – the latter representing the lived faith that equips students to cope with the wide variety of beliefs they will encounter in the society at large;

- Faith-based schools enable religious communities to preserve, strengthen and transmit their faith; (e.g., readers may wish to view the film *Bonjour Shalom* as an example)
- Offering educational choice is a way of respecting human and cultural dignity;
- Children should not be exposed to controversial ideas and beliefs (sex education, evolution, reproductive technologies) before they have a solid grasp of the tenets of their faith on these matters, as this may lead them to question the very basis of their faith. (Sweet, 1996)

***"I understand why a private school is so appealing..."***

In her study, *The Fourth 'R': Religion in the Classroom,* Sweet quotes students of religious schools:

> I know that my teacher wants what's best for me. (Grade 5 Sikh girl)
>
> I can talk to my teacher about my problems and she listens and prays with me (Grade 6 girl in a Christian school).
>
> (Sweet: 20)

In her study, Schaefer (2005) found that employers were often anxious to hire graduates of faith-based colleges because they had a better sense of who they were and a more acute sense of what was right and wrong. As well, she noted that such students did not have a problem integrating into the larger society and frequently made a decision to work in secular contexts.

Manjit Singh, a community activist and advocate for the public school system, offers a less positive opinion of religious schools:

> I understand why a private school is so appealing... A big plus is the absence of cultural and racial tensions, which is the norm in public school. This is an obvious bonus for the parents because children won't bring cultural and racial problems into the home, for which the parents will then have to find solutions...But this is only a temporary advantage...In the long run, as new Canadians, children have to get into the mainstream for economic survival.
>
> (Sweet: 15)

Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize laureate, in his book *Identity and Violence* (2006) argues strongly against the financing of faith-based schools in Great Britain, as he feels they offer a narrow view of the world and restrict the freedom of students to think for themselves about critical issues, including their personal identity. He believes that schooling students based on their faith promotes what he calls "plural monoculturalism" and a federation of groups, rather than a multi-

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culturalism based on freedom of choice and equal participation of all people in the common cultural identity. He promotes an education for citizenship as opposed to an education for cultural survival (but he is certainly not against fostering and maintaining individual cultures). Sen believes that commitment to the common culture and values should take precedence over commitment to one's own culture. He argues that rather than reducing existing state-financed faith-based schools, but actually *adding* others (for example, Muslim schools, Hindu and Sikh schools) to pre-existing Christian ones, can have the unfortunate effect of reducing the role of intellectual reasoning which children need the opportunity to cultivate and use. And this is happening at a time when there is a great need for broadening the horizon of understanding of other people and other groups, and when the ability to undertake reasoned decision-making is of particular importance. The limitations imposed on children are especially acute when the new religious schools give children little opportunity to cultivate reasoned choice in determining the priorities of their lives. Also they fail to alert students to the need to decide for themselves how the various components of their identities (related to nationality, language, literature, religion, ethnicity, cultural history, scientific interests, etc.) should receive attention. (Sen: 117-18).

Within Canada, the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland and British Columbia provide some form of funding for independent schools whether within or outside of the public system. In Holland, publicly-funded faith-based schools have existed within the public system since 1917. They are considered to be a success due mainly to the fact that the groups that receive funding must follow the curriculum, hire qualified teachers and teach about a number of contentious topics such as AIDS, sex education, and evolution. This, however, does not prevent them from also offering their own take on beliefs about such topics. Under the Dutch system, the different religious schools are often grouped together in the same building to enable students from the different religious communities to have contact with one another. While the experiment remains controversial, it has worked well and is often cited as a model for Canada (Sweet, 1996).

In Belgium, another approach has been adopted, as outlined in a report published in 2003. The Belgian government officially recognized certain religions as having a special status. This recognition allowed these religions to provide teachers to the public schools, at taxpayers' expense, so that schools could include religious instruction in the curriculum. In addition, the Belgian government agreed to pay the salaries and benefits to ministers and to subsidize the construction costs of houses of worship for these recognized religions. (see International Religious Freedom Report 2003, www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2003/24346.htm)

Would such a system work in Canada? Could the provinces afford to fund such a system? Does educating people in faith-based schools promote integration? Will it foster the creation of unity out of diversity and promote harmony among all groups in society in a more effective way than the public school system (assuming it is doing this)? Little research has been conducted on the effectiveness of faith-based schools in transmitting their system of values to their students and, as

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***"The limitations imposed on children are especially acute..."***

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a result, shaping their behaviour. In her book, Schaefer-Riley reports, as previously noted, that American companies were eager to hire graduates of faith-based colleges as these people have a better developed system of moral values and could be trusted to make ethical decisions. On the other hand, other research (*Christian Century*, 2006) has shown that faith-based schools have not been able to influence student's behaviour in a significant way.

## Accommodating religion in secular schools

The separation of church and state in either theory or practice is an integral part of many constitutions of western democracies. While a review of all instances would be informative, we have chosen to focus on the USA, the UK, Quebec and Canada (there is no separation of church and state under Canadian law.)

***"...these people have a better developed system of moral values and could be trusted to make ethical decisions."***

## Secularism

Many parents feel justified in demanding that they should control the religious training of their children, as they believe that the reigning philosophy in public school is secularism, a philosophy they are convinced excludes a role for religion in the public schools. It is also, as mentioned above, possibly the principal reason for sending their children to faith-based schools. What is secularism? One definition specifies that secularism involves two propositions:

> The first is that people belonging to different faiths and sections of society are equal before the law, the Constitution and government policy. The second requirement is that there can be no mixing up of religion and politics. It follows therefore that there can be no discrimination against anyone on the basis of religion or faith, nor is there room for the hegemony of one religion or majoritarian religious sentiments and aspirations. (http://www.imsc.res.in/~jayaram/Articles/lfrontline/node1.html)

Another source defines secularism as:

> "...that which seeks the development of the physical, moral, and intellectual nature of man to the highest possible point, as the immediate duty of life - which inculcates the practical sufficiency of natural morality apart from Atheism, Theism or the Bible - which selects as its method of procedure the promotion of human improvement by material means, and proposes these positive agreements as the common bond of union to all who would regulate life by reason and ennoble it by service" (Principles of Secularism, 17). (www.newadvent.org/cathen/13676a.htm)

The first definition is an elaboration of the introduction to the First amendment [of the Constitution of the U.S.] cited above. Secularists claim that what they are proposing is relig-

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ion-neutral: everyone is treated in the same fair-handed manner. They are not opposed to talking about religion or examining the role that religion has played in different disciplines through history. What they do oppose is endorsing and promoting a specific religion with the aim to proselytize. Where the opponents of secularism may be right is in their claim that as an "ism", secularism is based on a series of beliefs and values in the same way that faiths are, and as such it too has a "proselytizing" effect, even if this is not explicitly claimed or stated. Students in secular schools are constantly exposed to a specific view of the world with its underlying principles, beliefs and system of values.

## The U.S.

Religion and politics are two zones of influence in the exercise of power that are essentially independent of each other, but in reality have certain areas of interdependence[4]. In the U.S., where on paper[5] church and state are separate under the law, the first 16 words of the First Amendment of the Constitution state:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

As Nash and Bishop (2006) point out, educators have taken this to mean that only academic subjects belong in the schools and that religious material falls into the domain of religious institutions such as churches: They continue, however, to point out that

> ... in the post-9/11 era, we contend that educators in public schools need to re-examine the very core of what, and how, they teach students in order to help them become more globally aware, religiously literate citizens. (p. 33)

The separation of church and state does not mean that teachers and students cannot talk about religion in the schools; in fact, division is strongly supported by a considerable body of research in the United States (Greenawalt, 2006, Proceedings of the Couchiching Summer Conference, 2004 "God's back- with a vengeance"; Nord, 1995; Nord and Haynes, 1998; Nash and Bishop, 2006; Noonan, 1998; Del Fattore, 2004). While most jurisdictions in the U.S. have passed laws forbidding the saying of the Christian

*(Continued on page 54)*

***"The separation of church and state does not mean that teachers and students cannot talk about religion in the schools..."***

4. In his article, Sharlet (2006) points out that many Christian fundamentalists believe "that the nation was conceived of as Christian, that the separation of church and state is either a "myth" altogether (Christian David Barton's position, endorsed by a number of Congressmen) or meant only to prevent a single denomination from prevailing, a position that fundamentalists consider a fair compromise to accommodate the anxieties of unbelievers (p. 38)

5. "On paper" implies that religion is brought into the political forum on a regular basis and certainly influences the election of adherents to different levels of government, to membership on the Supreme Court and the writing and enactment of laws; as well, the word "God" is constantly used in political speeches.

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Lord's Prayer at the beginning of the school day, the saying of a religious-based grace at functions or the public celebration of religious holidays, these proscriptions do not prevent teachers from talking about the role of religion in different disciplines such as history, education, law, biology and culture. In many states, schools offer some form of world religions course as an option. These courses are knowledge-based, with any form of proselytizing forbidden. Teachers, individual schools or school boards cannot promote any given faith.

Greenawalt (2005), a Professor of Law at Columbia University and a former Deputy Solicitor General of the United States, has formulated a number of important questions concerning the teaching of religion in public schools. While formulated for the American context, they are certainly relevant to both the Canadian and, more specifically, the Ontario context.

1. How far should texts and teachers go in talking about religious perspectives when it is not part of the subject matter as it has come to be defined?
2. Should texts and teachers cover religious perspectives when they do not fall reasonably within a subject matter?
3. Should text and teachers cover religious perspectives that provide answers that are implausible from the standpoint of secular disciplines?
4. Should courses in religion itself be offered to combat the implicit secular message of the public school system?
5. How should one select material that relates to religion?
6. How much of an effort should be made to get students to see things from a religious perspective?
7. How far should teachers go in undertaking a close critical analysis of religious perspectives?
8. How free should teachers feel to introduce their own convictions and practices? (p. 87)

***"These courses are knowledge-based, with any form of proselytizing forbidden."***

A careful examination of these questions will immediately reveal that they are at the heart of many of the ongoing debates in our schools. Question 3, for example, is closely tied to the debate on evolution. Should science teachers be required to present Creationism and Intelligent Design as possible explanations for evolution on the same basis as the theory of evolution derived from scientific enquiry, if the two former explanations have no currency in the field of science? Would it also be the case when talking about the creation of the world – for example, the Big Bang Theory? Can school boards, as is the case in certain counties in the U.S., mandate that Creationism and Intelligent Design be taught, without contravening the First Amendment? In the spirit of accommodation, should one present contending positions that have no basis in a given discipline? Should parents be allowed to withdraw their students from science class if the teacher presents a theory of evolution based on Darwin and recent scientific research?

At a more practical level, should schools have to provide a room

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where students can pray on a regular basis? If so, should they be able to monitor what goes on in these rooms? If a majority of students in a school are of a given faith, should the timetable be modified to accommodate them? The very act of asking such questions indicates that the boundaries between church and state have become increasingly blurred, that parents are insisting that policies within schools take into consideration the religious beliefs of the students.

## The Canadian/Ontario Context

Given the different areas of influence of church and state in Canada and the claims that public schools are founded on a philosophy of secularism, can such schools meet the needs of their students in terms of religious and moral education? At present in public schools of Ontario, the Christian Lord's Prayer is no longer said at the beginning of the day, religion is not taught, as was the case at certain times in the past, no single religion is promoted (even if there may be an underlying Judeo-Christian *leitmotif*), religious holidays are celebrated, though detached from their religious origin (e.g., Easter Bunny and Easter eggs) , religious symbols are not displayed in the hallways or classrooms and teachers and students are not allowed to proselytize on school property or in the classroom. However, some schools have made accommodations such as the following:

1. Rooms are set aside for students to hold religious services at times that do not interfere with their attending class;
2. Courses are offered on the major World Religions;
3. Students can wear symbols of their faith;
4. Students can form clubs that have a religious focus;
5. Schools take into consideration different religious observances;
6. Schools provide a variety of food choices in the cafeteria to respond to the dietary needs of different groups of students;
7. Schools provide space for out-of-school-hours religious instruction;
8. The scheduling of exams/test/activities takes into consideration the religious backgrounds of the students;
9. Schools with a majority of students from a given faith make scheduling accommodations to better meet the needs of these students.

While these initiatives have certainly created a more inclusive culture within the school, one can legitimately ask if more could be done or if we have already gone too far and need to formulate a new policy of "multiculturalism within defined limits" as is being proposed in Denmark (Gardner, 2006).

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***"...religion is not taught, as was the case at certain times in the past, no single religion is promoted..."***

6. The origin of the rabbit bringing eggs dates back to pre-Christian times when eggs were seen as a sign of fertility.

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Two constituencies have developed more comprehensive programs with the long-term goal of helping students not only learn about other religions but develop empathetic attitudes towards them and at the same time examine issues from a number of different religious and moral points of view. These jurisdictions are the United Kingdom and Québec. They are examined in the next two sections.

## The United Kingdom Model

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in the U.K. has outlined an ambitious plan for religious education within the equivalent of our public schools. They have developed optional curricula for two different groups of students: ages five to 14 and ages 14 to 19, with different goals for students within these groups. The curricular objectives are divided into *Learning about religion* and *Learning from religion*. In their analysis of the U.K. curriculum, Rosenblith and Bailey (2006) clarify that "Learning about Religion" essentially involves gaining knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs, practices, and expressions. The curricular thread of "Learning from Religion" aims to help students make sense of who they are, of the meaning of life, and of right and wrong.

***"This curriculum is certainly more comprehensive in scope and focus than the world religions course at the high school level in Ontario..."***

The overall aims of the Religious Education curriculum are to help pupils to:

- acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the other principal religions represented in Great Britain,
- develop an understanding of the influence of beliefs, values and traditions on individuals, communities, societies and cultures,
- develop the ability to make reasoned and informed judgements about religious and moral issues, with reference to the teachings of the principal religions represented in Great Britain,
- enhance their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development by developing awareness of the fundamental questions of life raised by human experiences, and of how religious teachings can relate to them,
- respond to such questions with reference to the teachings and practices of religions, and to their own understanding and experience,
- reflect on their own beliefs, values and experiences in the light of their study,
- develop a positive attitude towards other people, respecting their right to hold beliefs different from their own, and towards living in a society of diverse religions.

According to the plan of the syllabus, Christianity, in addition to one of the following religions must be taught: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism, with flexibility in terms of teaching other faiths. This curriculum is certainly more comprehensive in scope and focus than the world religions course at the high school level in Ontario. It is an innovation in

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curriculum design that offers a number of positive features. First, no such course presently exists at the primary level. Second, it is designed to take the student beyond simple knowledge of the facts and into the realm of experiential knowledge. Third, it also has students grappling with religious and moral issues examined from the different religious viewpoints. Finally, students are required to take the religions education course on a yearly basis. The teachers who offer these courses receive specialized training in the same way as those who teach history or biology.

## The Quebec Model

Prior to the passing of the *Quebec Education Act* in 1988, schools in Québec were organized along "confessional" lines, Catholic and Protestant, a system that was created in 1867 through *The British North America Act*. This system remained in placed until Quebec deconfessionalized its school system in 1988 and began organizing it along linguistic lines, a process that is still ongoing. Deconfessionalization did not immediately remove the right of Catholic and Protestant parents requiring that schools offer their children religious education (catechism). Children at the primary level continue to receive religious instruction as part of their regular school day from teachers trained in the discipline. However, to maintain the rights of these parents, Quebec had to again invoke the Canadian charter's Notwithstanding Clause[7] in 2000 for a period of five years, ending in February of 2005, until they could undertake more in-depth province-wide consultation on what Quebeckers wanted. Invoking the clause meant that the conditions of the *Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* along with Quebec's own Charter did not apply as concerns discrimination in terms of religion. The *Proulx Report* (1999) based on the first series of consultations made a number of important recommendations which are summarized below.

They suggested that :

1. The Government of Québec and the National Assembly confirm the primacy of the right to equality and freedom of conscience and religion guaranteed in the Québec *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and, consequently, that they repeal or not renew the current notwithstanding clauses in education legislation which override the application of the Charters.

2. Legislation be enacted to establish a secular system of public schools dispensing preschool, elementary and secondary education.

3. The current denominational statuses held by public schools be revoked.

4. The *Education Act* be amended to stipulate that the values and beliefs of religious groups cannot be used as criteria to set up a public school for the purposes of a

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***"Children at the primary level continue to receive religious instruction as part of their regular school day from teachers..."***

7. Invoking the clause enabled Quebec to opt out of clauses of the Charter that it would ordinarily have to follow.

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specific project.

5. The basic school regulations for elementary and secondary education provide for the study of religions from a cultural perspective in place of Catholic or Protestant religious instruction, and that the study of religions be compulsory for all students.

6. Programs for the study of religions from a cultural perspective be developed and implemented in keeping with the guidelines and framework proposed by the *Commission des programmes d'études* of the Ministère de l'Éducation, and with the relevant provisions of the *Education Act*.

7. The Ministère de l'Éducation encourage flexible measures for teacher in-service training for the study of religions from a cultural perspective and allocate the necessary financial resources for such measures.

8. The *Education Act* authorize schools to provide common religious and spiritual support services for students of all faiths and that these services be publicly funded.

9. The Government define the general objectives of religious and spiritual support services in the basic school regulations, just as it defines those of other student services; that the local school governing boards draw up programs of activities in keeping with these general objectives; that the school boards set the criteria for hiring religious support specialists in keeping with these same objectives and without discrimination.

10. These recommendations should be adopted, then implemented gradually. (*Proulx Report*: Conclusions and Recommendations, p.2-3)

The recommendations proposed in the *Proulx Report* are not without controversy. To begin with, the government must decide if it will:

1. maintain the status quo which will involve invoking the Notwithstanding Clause of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* for a third time,

2. Provide denominational religious instruction for all, or,

3. Offer a program based on a cultural approach to the teaching of religion.

***"...the government must respond to the critics of the report."***

As well, the government must respond to the critics of the report. Many Catholic and Protestant parents want to keep the status quo, many parents of children of other faiths would like to have the same privileges as Catholics and Protestants, and many parents of children with no religious affiliation want no rights or privileges for any religions. Faced with the recom-

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mendations of the *Proulx Report*, the government undertook another series of consultations. The quotes reproduced below, extracted from the committee's report, provide a description of the new orientation being proposed.

> *The religious education we are advocating thus promotes a positive view of otherness and diversity (p. 13).*
>
> *...knowledge of beliefs and practices associated with various religions must be oriented toward the acknowledgment of others. (p. 16)*
>
> *Anchoring religious education in the students' experience of religion requires developing a style of pedagogy that stresses their autonomy and acceptance of responsibility for what they learn. (p. 22)*
>
> *The training they (teachers) receive not only familiarizes teachers with their subject content (beliefs, figures, works, etc.) but also gives them an understanding of its meaning, symbolic depth and impact on civilization (p. 24).*

Based on its research, the Committee in its list included recommendations to:

1. Abolish the current system where students choose among moral education, Catholic religious and moral instruction and Protestant moral and religious education in elementary school and during Secondary Cycle One,
2. Create a new religious education program based on the principles outlined in this brief and distinct from both confessional teaching and from the teaching of religion as a cultural phenomenon,
3. Set up a single educational path for all students from the start of elementary school to the end of secondary school, devoting equal time to religion and ethics,
4. Teach these two subjects in elementary school as separate modules within one and the same program,
5. Teach each subject in secondary school as a different program,
6. Ensure that future elementary-school homeroom teachers - who are generally entrusted with religious and moral education programs - receive suitable initial training in these fields of knowledge and that a good grounding in ethics and religious culture be an integral part of training for all elementary and secondary school teachers. (p.32-33)

To decide how to deal with these recommendations, the Quebec government has set up a committee (created in October 2006) to study how it can accommodate students from different religious backgrounds within the existing school system.

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***"...many parents of children with no religious affiliation want no rights or privileges for any religions."***

# Teaching Religion in the Schools

| Rank | Private Faith-Based Character Value Scores | | Private Nonsectarian Character Value Scores | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Honest | 6.82 | Honest | 6.73 |
| 2 | Responsible | 6.52 | Responsible | 6.43 |
| 3 | Trustworthy | 6.48 | Fair | 6.24 |
| 4 | Caring | 6.47 | Civic-minded | 6.22 |
| 5 | Just | 6.43 | Committed | 6.22 |
| 6 | Compassionate | 6.42 | Trustworthy | 6.21 |
| 7 | Fair | 6.33 | Tolerant | 6.12 |
| 8 | Respectful | 6.32 | Open-minded | 6.05 |
| 9 | Civic-minded | 6.21 | Cooperative | 5.96 |
| 10 | Committed | 6.61 | Just | 5.95 |

*Table 1*

*(Continued from page 59)*

***Table 1***

## Education and Moral Values

Before formulating a proposal for the teaching of religion in the school, I would like to report on a relevant study by Chen, Dalton and Crosby (2006). One focus of their research was to determine what moral or ethical values were promoted in faith-based and non-sectarian colleges in the U.S. The Character Education Values and Practices Inventory developed by the authors was sent to 1063 chief student-affairs leaders (e.g., Deans of Student Affairs). Respondents were asked to rank order 44 values in order of importance using a seven-point Likert-type scale. The ten most important moral values for faith-based and non-sectarian institutions along with the overall average have been reproduced in Table 1.

From the results, it is evident that faith-based and non-sectarian schools promote a large number of similar values related to moral character. In commenting on the results of their study, however, the authors stressed the differences between the two types of schools

> ... it was not surprising to learn that colleges and universities do differ significantly in some of the moral values they promote and these differences give a distinctive moral orientation to the ways in which faith-oriented and non-sectarian colleges and universities seek to promote moral and ethical development as an aspect of undergraduate education. They differ significantly also in educational activities

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# Teaching Religion in the Schools

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> and strategies they utilize to encourage moral growth among their students. Faith-oriented colleges promote such values as compassion, faithfulness, love, humility, because of their close connection to the moral qualities extolled by their religious roots... These moral qualities and related support activities are clearly less important in non-sectarian colleges and universities since these institutions have no formal ties to religious organizations and operate in a more secular environment. (Chen, Dalton, and Crosby p.61)

While the authors point out that the two types of schools differ significantly also in educational activities and strategies they utilize to encourage moral growth among their students, they highlight the fact that faith-based and non-sectarian schools agree on the importance of fostering a number of key moral values and beliefs. The study shows that values can be nourished in both contexts

## A plan of action for public schools

Given recent events involving people who were born and raised in Western countries, notably France and Great Britain, being engaged in acts of terrorism against their home country (in many cases a feeling of isolation or exclusion is cited as the cause for their actions), it is essential that public schools develop in their students a sense of belonging to a global community. One of the important ways of doing this is through the teaching of systems of religious beliefs and values within the school system. Students who are better informed and who have discussed issues and problems with people of different belief systems have a greater chance of being more open to new ideas and of being able to compromise in conflict situations.

Education plays a critical role in the socialization process of future citizens. To prepare all students to participate fully and on an equal basis in Canadian society, school boards need to be proactive. Freedom is never without limits; the same goes for accommodation. We need to be sensitive to different cultural and spiritual traditions and help the representatives foster their culture but not at the expense of also fostering a sense of belonging to the common culture. Public school boards need to rethink their approach to religious and value education within the school system.

***"Freedom is never without limits..."***

Based on the review of the different options presented above, what are the lessons that one can draw for the Ontario and Canadian context? I would propose that the following elements be part of the discussion about programs for religion in the classroom.

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8. On Oct. 16, 2006, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty announced that the teaching of character education will become an integral part of all subjects in the Ontario curriculum. For a detailed description see "News Release on Character Education," Oct. 16, 2006, Office of the Premier at www.ontario.ca/premier

# Teaching Religion in the Schools

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1. The approach to religion in the classroom in France, namely, laïcité, would not be acceptable within the Canadian framework; to adopt it would be a step backwards in our attempts to be open and accommodating to the large number of new Canadians from a variety of religions backgrounds that we accept each year into our community,
2. The program should begin at the elementary level with an emphasis on important moral values such as those identified in the study by Chen, Dalton and Crosby (2006). While at an early age students are not prepared to understand the more complex teachings of different religious traditions, they can be taught values such as honesty and responsibility (cf. program from the United Kingdom),
3. At the junior high and high school levels, there should be study of the main religious faiths along with agnosticism, atheism and humanism (henceforth, all referred to as faiths), and not only the monotheistic ones, as is often the case. Such a study should also allow for examining religious that are particular to specific groups (e.g. Mennonites, Hutterites, Amish),
4. The curriculum should include examination of important ethical and moral issues within the framework of the different faiths to make students aware of how different belief systems conceptualize and resolve problems. The study of religion, to be valid, must deal with real-lived experiences. To help students become more open to people of other faiths/belief systems, they need to discuss issues with other students,
5. Curricula for the different courses must take into consideration the input of all the stakeholders and not only the appointed representatives of a given faith community. The diverse nature of many faiths makes such participation essential if one is to have a representative view of the different belief systems,
6. Teachers responsible for offering these courses must receive specialized training in the same way that science or history teachers do. Such courses must be mandated and receive the same level of funding as other discipline-based courses,
7. Participation in such courses should be compulsory. To prepare learners to live in an increasingly multicultural world, school systems need to ensure that they learn how to live with people who do not believe in the same things they do or act in the same ways,
8. There needs to be accommodation at the level of dress, religious symbols, food, holi (y)days, etc.,

(Continued on page 63)

***"...they can be taught values such as honesty and responsibility..."***

# Teaching Religion in the Schools

*(Continued from page 62)*

9. A set of guidelines should be developed for faith groups who use rooms set aside for meetings within the school. It is not a question of "faith police" but rather ensuring that groups cannot use such meetings to preach hatred of other groups within the school.

10. In the discussion of issues in other discipline areas, religion should be introduced when it has a legitimate role to play; for example, in discussions about the condition of aboriginal people in Canada today: the role that religion played in residential schools needs to be considered, as well as the role of the missionaries in previous centuries. Similarly, it is difficult to talk about the legal system and the different charters in Canada without considering the influence of Judeo-Christian values. Religious explanations should be introduced where they have a legitimate role to play and excluded when they do not.

I would like to conclude with a quote from Ben-Porath (2006) on expansive education, as I strongly believe that the aim of teaching religion in the schools shares the same purpose as expansive education and, in essence, is a major component of such a vision of education.

> The concept of expansive education shares with the notion of citizenship as shared fate the open-mindedness that is the benchmark of inclusion and pluralism; yet both are not limitless in their acceptance of a wide range of perspectives. Both notions are bounded by the understanding of the basic democratic principles of equality and liberty and the way they should interplay in making democratic institutions. Both endorse pluralism as a required social manifestation of democracy- citizenship as shared fate is based on a concept of legitimacy that arises from mutual justification, which in turn is the result of civic equality and reciprocal respect. Expansive education is fundamentally aimed at cultivating a commitment to civic engagement in the process of such mutual justification and at endorsing a host of views that maintain both democratic and national commitments. Understanding and experiencing the importance of exposure to a plural environment of perspectives, affiliations and interpretations are necessary steps toward engaging in the mutual process of justification that legitimizes a democratic community of shared fate. (p.121). ◊

***"I strongly believe that the aim of teaching religion in the schools shares the same purpose as expansive education..."***

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# Teaching Religion in the Schools

*Appendix 1*

## Controversial Religions Topics
## Compiled by
## R. Murray Thomas

1. Teaching religious doctrine that conflicts with the government's political philosophy or state religion.

2. Displaying religious symbols or writings in schools that are financed by tax monies.

3. Allowing students and teachers to wear adornments that identify their religious affiliation.

4. Celebrating religious holidays in schools.

5. Using public tax funds to finance – wholly or in part – schools operated by religious groups.

6. Offering religious-education classes in state-financed schools.

7. Including the study of humanism, agnosticism, and atheism in religious-education classes.

8. In state-funded schools, portraying one religion as truer than - or superior to - other religions.

9. Conducting ceremonies or assemblies during which students and teachers sing religious hymns and repeat religious maxims.

10. Offering prayers at schools functions.

11. Including religious beliefs in pledges of allegiance to the nation.

12. Promoting religious beliefs in textbooks, especially in the fields of history and science.

13. Accounting for the universe's origin by the big bang theory instead of - or in addition to – religious versions of the creation of the universe.

14. Teaching Darwin's theory of evolution instead of - or in addition to - teaching religious interpretations of human beings.

15. Teaching that personified, invisible spirits are the causes of human diseases and deformity, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, deluges, meteor showers and the like.

(*Religion in the Schools* , p. ix-x)

# Teaching Religion in the Schools

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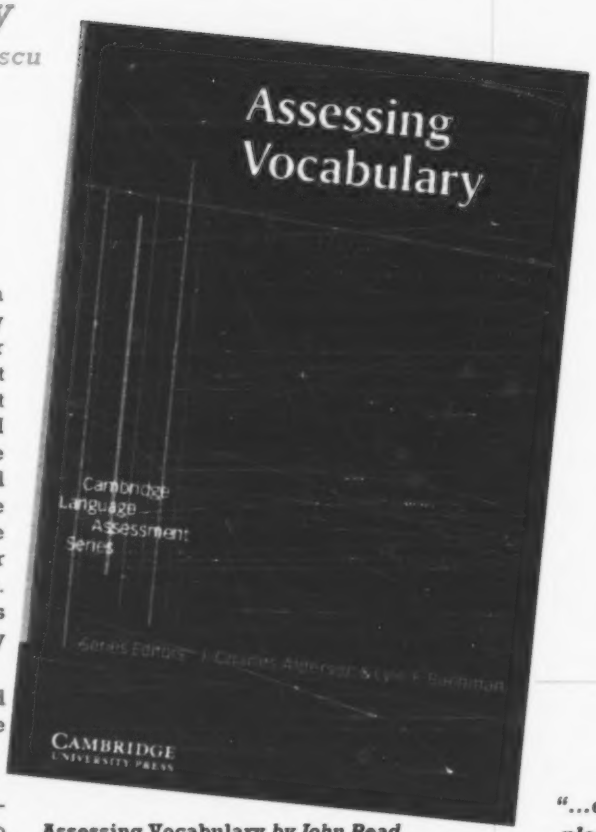
*BOOK REVIEW:*

# *Assessing Vocabulary*

*Review by Maria Claudia Petrescu*




**Assessing Vocabulary** *by John Read, Cambridge University Press. (Cambridge Language Assessment Series) 297 pages*

***Assessing Vocabulary*** by John Read (2000) is a book that every researcher, test designer or graduate student with a special interest in vocabulary assessment should get acquainted with. If you assume, as I did, that vocabulary assessment is one of the most straightforward, clear, and easy-to- manage areas of language testing, this book may help to change your mind, and consequently your teaching and assessment practices. Indeed, there is much more than meets the eye when it comes to vocabulary assessment.

One of the first things Read stresses is how important it is to define the purpose of a lexical test before tackling its design, usage or validation. Specifying the purpose of the assessment is critical in that it helps to guide test developers as they select or compose appropriate features for the test.

Read differentiates, for example, three distinct types of tests:

1. Those prepared for research purposes.
2. Those used to make decisions about learners.
3. Tests whose purpose is to make decisions about language programs.

In Chapter 6 he details some of the constraints on each type of assessment (p.151). Since most of my professional life I have been a teacher and not a researcher and have viewed vocabulary test design from a teacher's stand, I welcomed this classification of test types, as it seemed to clarify why and how the content and the objectives of classroom tests are different from those of tests for research purposes.

Read also points out that construct definition plays a central part in the validation of a language test because if it is not clear what we are testing there is a real danger of making faulty interpretations from the results. The definition of vocabulary knowledge, for example, should not be made simply in terms of knowing individual words unless this is necessary for specific research purposes on certain aspects of lexical acquisition.

Read also reveals how much is involved in knowing individual words

*(Continued on page 68)*

***"...construct definition plays a central part in the validation of a language test."***

# Assessing Vocabulary

***John Read is Head of the Applied Language Studies and Linguistics department at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.***

***"The way we choose the words we test and the way we present the words in a test are relevant concerns in test design."***

*(Continued from page 67)*

and how difficult it is to satisfactorily measure the acquisition of such knowledge. He cites a useful and interesting distinction made by Meara (p.28) "between testing how well individual words are known and making an overall assessment of the state of a learner's vocabulary."

As a teacher, I have to admit that I am guilty of not always making this distinction. For example, I used to give students discrete, selective, context-independent tests for the purpose of assessing their proficiency or progress throughout the course; I then quite unintentionally - and unfortunately as it turns out - correlated the students' results, or lack of them, with the overall state of the learner's vocabulary to arrive at some assessment. Thus, I was particularly struck by Read's call for complementing a focus on knowledge of individual words with "a more macro-level perspective on the overall state of the learners' vocabulary knowledge" (p.248).

In addition to deciding on what it is that we want to test, Read draws attention to the importance of setting the characteristics of the test input, in other words the design of actual test tasks. The way we choose the words we test and the way we present the words in a test are relevant concerns in test design. I found particularly interesting his notions about the importance of context in a vocabulary test.

The ongoing debate about whether to present test words in context or not reminds me of another famous debate in the vocabulary field regarding the teaching of vocabulary directly or indirectly. I know that the general belief is that vocabulary should always be presented in context but I now think that this decision should be based on the purpose of the test.

For example, if we want to test the facilitative role of cognates in the lexical acquisition of Romanian-speaking learners of English, a word recognition task where there is no context involved seems to be the natural choice.

On the other hand, in a classroom situation a teacher might choose to assess his or her learners on the appropriateness of their vocabulary use in relation to an actual writing or speaking task. This way, the vocabulary measures are embedded in the writing or speaking task and are context dependent.

The section of the book in which Read discusses the importance of deciding on the characteristics of the expected response produced a pleasant surprise for me as a teacher. It was reassuring to see that my practice of allowing low-proficiency-level learners to respond in their L1 whenever possi-

*(Continued on page 69)*

# Assessing Vocabulary

***Flavour of the Text***

**Chapter 1**

**The place of vocabulary in language assessment**

...Today's language proficiency tests do not set out to determine whether learners know the meaning of *magazine* or *put on* or *approximate*; whether they can get the sequence of tenses right in conditional sentences; or whether they can distinguish *ship* and *sheep*. Instead, the tests are based on tasks simulating communication activities that the learners are likely to be engaged in outside of the classroom. Learners may be asked to write a letter of complaint to a hotel manager, to show that they understand the main idea of a university lecture or to discuss in an interview how they hope to achieve their career ambitions. Presumably, good vocabulary knowledge and skills will help test-takers to perform these tasks better than if they lack such competence, but neither vocabulary nor any other structural component of the language is the primary focus of the assessment. The test-takers are judged on how adequately they meet the overall language demands of the task.

Recent books on language testing by leading scholars such as Bachman and Palmer (1996) and McNamara (1996) demonstrate how the task has become the basic element in contemporary test design. This is consistent with broader trends in western education systems away from formal standardised tests made up of multiple items to measure students' knowledge of a content area, towards what is variously known as alternative, performance-based or standards-based assessment (see, for example, Baker, O'Neil and Linn, 1993; Taylor, 1994; O'Malley and Valdez Pierce, 1996), which includes judging students' ability to perform more open-ended, holistic and 'real-world' tasks within their normal learning environment.

Is there a place, then, for vocabulary assessment within task-based language testing?

(Continued from page 68)

ble (especially in an EFL context) is a valid and effective approach.

Of course, this practice is not as easily achieved in an ESL context where teachers often work with classes of learners who speak various first languages.

It seems to me that the question of whether bilingual tests should be used has much in common with the debate over the appropriate role of L1 in teaching ESL/EFL. As a teacher, I personally prefer to be aware of my students' L1 and cannot but applaud Read's conclusion that "there is certainly a case for using the first language when it is practicable and when L1 provides a better means for the test-takers to express their understanding of the target vocabulary" (p. 170). Readers may be as grateful as I was for the wealth of new information in Chapter 7 - "Comprehensive measures of vocabulary."

(Continued on page 70)

***"...the question of whether bilingual tests should be used has much in common with the debate over the appropriate role of L1 in teaching ESL/EFL."***

# Assessing Vocabulary

***Assessing Vocabulary* by John Read. Cambridge University Press (2000)**

(Cambridge Language Assessment Series)

Chapter Contents:

1. The place of vocabulary in language assessment
2. The nature of vocabulary
3. Research on vocabulary acquisition and use
4. Research on vocabulary assessment
5. Vocabulary tests: four case studies
6. The design of discrete vocabulary tests
7. Comprehensive measures of vocabulary
8. Further developments in vocabulary assessment

***"...a comprehensive overview of both theory and practice in the field of vocabulary assessment..."***

*(Continued from page 69)*

I appreciated (and for the most part understood) the statistical measures and analyses provided by Read, related to test input and test-taker responses.

I found particularly interesting the section on quantitative measures of learners' writing. Although I was somewhat familiar with the ESL Composition Profile and have periodically used analytic rating systems when evaluating my students' writing, I had never before viewed this type of evaluation as a form of vocabulary assessment.

Also, the lexical density statistics that Read provided were similarly enlightening, in the sense that they helped not only to identify the lexical features embedded in what is considered 'good writing' but also explained how raters might judge the lexical aspect of learner performance in writing tasks.

This chapter once again made me realize that although lexical statistics seem on the surface rather objectively dry and straightforward, and listing and counting of words is now easily done with the help of a computer analysis, there is still a considerable amount of subjective rating involved in defining the lexical categories and classifying the individual lexical items that make vocabulary assessment a complex domain.

To conclude, John Read's *Assessing Vocabulary* provided me with a comprehensive overview of both theory and practice in the field of vocabulary assessment, helping me to reflect not only on my own assessment practices but also on the elements of test design. Read's work has enlivened my interest in research in the field of lexical acquisition and encouraged me to explore more deeply. ◊

*Maria Claudia Petrescu is a PhD candidate at OISE/University of Toronto in the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Department, Second Language Education, and ESL instructor with the Toronto District School Board.*

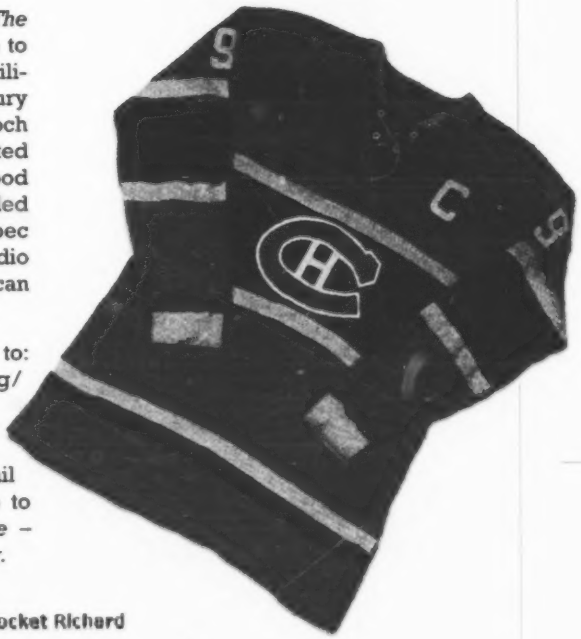
# Internet Corner

*By Karen Thomson*

**As a companion resource** to *The Hockey Sweater* CD-ROM, go to the Canadian Museum of Civilization site where you'll find a treasury of supporting material on author Roch Carrier, his famous story, and related topics. The website is especially good for listening, as it contains extended interviews with the famous Quebec writer. Complete texts of the audio scripts are presented, so students can listen and read.

Just point and click your way to: www.civilization.ca/cpm/catalog/cat2208e.html

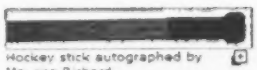
The focus at the Museum of Civilization site is a history of mail order catalogues in Canada, so go to the section titled: *Before e-commerce – Roch Carrier and The Hockey Sweater.*



**Rocket Richard**

[Listen to audio (1.4 Mb)]

Maurice Richard's 50-goals-in-50-games hockey stick.



Hockey stick autographed by Maurice Richard.

Maurice Richard brand skates. Eaton's Christmas 1956, p. 43.

Maurice Richard facing off against Ivan Irwin.

Maurice Richard with Stanley Cup.

"Maurice Richard" hockey skates.

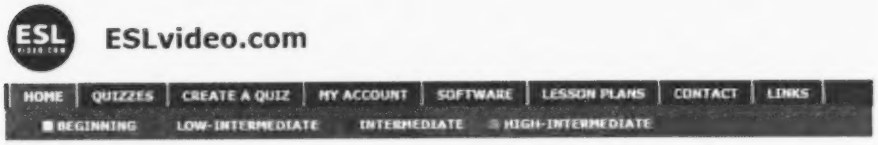
In that section, Roch Carrier reflects on the experiences of his boyhood, growing up in the rural Quebec village of Sainte-Justine in the 1940s. The site also explores hockey as a source of cultural identity and details the life and times of the folk hero, Maurice 'The Rocket' Richard.

Students will laugh when they hear Carrier's story about using mail-order catalogues as hockey shin pads. He also explains the significance of the Eaton's catalogue in Quebec households, and shares the surprising background story about how he came to write his famous story. The site is rich in historic photographs, audio resources, and especially the personal recollections of Carrier.

***"The website is especially good for listening..."***

*(Continued on page 72)*

# Internet Corner




*(Continued from page 71)*

ESLvideo.com provides free ESL video quizzes and resources for ESL. There are four difficulty levels in each Quiz: beginning, low intermediate, intermediate and high intermediate.

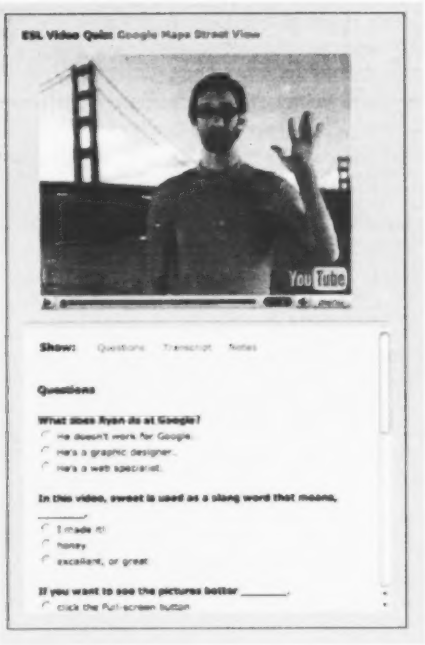
The first quiz contains video clips of many different people interviewed on the street, telling what they can do. It contains both subtitles and closed captions; for example, "Can you cook?" and "What's your best dish?" Excellent for authentic speaking samples.

More advanced video clips ask questions such as "How does acupuncture work?" or "Why do you Tube [watch YouTube videos]?" or "What can you do with Google Street View?"

***"...Hi! What's your name?"***

Other YouTube 'streeter' video clips record on the street interviewees as they answer such questions as

- "What do you hope to accomplish before you die?"
- "Hi! What's your name?"
- "What have you got in the [shopping] bag?"


ESL Video Quiz Google Maps Street View
YouTube
Show:
Questions
What does Ryan do at Google?
He doesn't work for Google.
He's a graphic designer.
He's a web specialist.
In this video, sweet is used as a slang word that means,
I made it!
honey
excellent, or great
If you want to see the pictures better _____.
click the Full-screen button

The site contains links to Podcasts, Lesson Plans on the videos, and Making Your Own Videos. ◊

Teachers: Please feel free to Create New Quizzes and add them to your website or blog. Click here to see how it works.

# Calling all Reviewers

***Contact* is looking for** people to read and review books and learning materials related to ESL.

These include classroom textbooks, academic works, multi-media materials and books of general interest with some connection to ESL.

If you are such a person and you like to write, then consider being a reviewer for *Contact*.

For our next issues in the Fall of 2007 and winter of 2008, we are looking for reviewers for the following titles:

- *Connecting Speaking & Writing in Second Language Instruction*, by Robert Weissberg. (2006) The University of Michigan Press. 172 pages
- *Teacher Man – A Memoir*, by Frank McCourt. (2005) Scribner. 258 pages
- *How to Teach English with Technology* – with CD-ROM, by Gavin Dudeney and Nicky Hockly. (2007) Pearson Longman. 192 pages
- *Bad Language - Are Some Words Better than Others?* by Edwin L. Battistella. (2005) Oxford University Press. 240 pages
- *How to make People Like you in 90 Seconds or Less*, by Nicholas Boothman. (2000) Workman Publishing. 180 pages

**Tips for Reviewers:**

Summarize the content, identify the audience/s, note organizational elements such as glossaries, indexes and citations of other works, if applicable. Describe illustrative material, comment on the author/s' writing style, the layout and design, and evaluate the usefulness to other ESL professionals. Extract a paragraph or two that you think would give our readers 'the flavour of the text'. Be as positive as you can. Enjoy the experience.

Your review may be gently edited for length and other normal copy editing procedures.

**Submission Deadlines:**

- for October issue – Sept. 15, 2007
- for February issue – December 31, 2007

**The Facts:**

Word length: 1000 words maximum

Submit by: e-mail, CD, or hard copy.

Format: straightforward word processing. Do not design or lay out the review.

Illustrations or photos: If you include these, do so as separate attachments.

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Contact TESL Ontario at:
www.teslontario.org or administration@teslontario.org

Phone: 416.593.4243 Ext. 3 or 1.800.327.4827 Ext. 3 (for Ontario callers only)

**All about You**

Provide your name, your professional affiliation/experience, e-mail address and telephone number/s where you can normally be reached. ◊

***"Calling all reviewers..."***